Chrome Shelled Regios Volume17

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These are novel illustrations that were included in volume 17

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●あまぎしゅうすけ

第15回ファンタジア長編小説大賞佳作「マテリアルナイト　少女は巨人と踊る」でデビュー。広島県在住。止めたり復活したりと色々な最近ですが、詳しくはあとがきにでも。そんなことよりきのこの山のビスケット部分て、もしかしてすごい進化してたりしない？　以前はこの部分が嫌いだったのに、この前食べたらなんか美味しかったよ。

イラスト：深遊
カバーデザイン：designCREST

鋼殻のレギオス

CHROME SHELLED REGIOS

17 サマー・ナイト・レイヴ

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SYUSUKE AMAGI

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鋼殻のレギオス17
サマー・ナイト・レイヴ

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富士見書房

鋼殻のレギオス17
サマー・ナイト・レイヴ

（今夜、デルボネの遺産、その最奥部に挑戦する）

グレンダンが誇る念威繰者だったデルボネ。その強大な遺産を受け取ろうとするフェリだが、それは、大きな危険を孕むものでもあった。レイフォンのために、危険を承知で遺産を受け取ろうとするフェリ。一方レイフォンは、ニーナとクラリーベルと行った訓練試合を通し、己の中で何かがふっきれるのを感じる。一歩を踏みだそうとするレイフォン。メイシェンは、そんなレイフォンに不安を覚える。レイフォンが、フェリに向ける眼差しにも。

「わたしは、レイとんが……レイとんのことが……」

止まらない運命と想いが行き着く先は――!?

ファンタジア文庫
雨木シュウスケ作品集

マテリアルナイト　少女は巨人と踊る
マテリアルナイトII 少女は聖霊と歌う
マテリアルナイトIII 少女は蒼剣と語る
マテリアルナイトIV 少女は世界と歩む
マテリアルナイトV そして少女は慈しむ

鋼殻のレギオス
鋼殻のレギオス 2 サイレント・トーク
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鋼殻のレギオス 4 コンフィデンシャル・コール
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鋼殻のレギオス 17 サマー・ナイト・レイヴ

レジェンド・オブ・レギオスI リグザリオ洗礼
レジェンド・オブ・レギオスII イグナシス覚醒
レジェンド・オブ・レギオスIII レギオス顕現

「気のせい、よね？」

レイフォンは、フェリにひかれている――？

鋼殻のレギオス

CHROME SHELLED REGIOS

17 サマー・ナイト・レイヴ

鉄鞭がニーナの胸の前で交差され、
レイフォンに向かって跳躍してくる
クラリーベルの胡蝶炎翅剣が剄光を放ちレイフォンに迫る

「……よし」

レイフォンも覚悟を決める

「ひとつだけ約束しろ。
二人とも生きてたら
おれと戦え」

Prologue

There was something very important.

Layfon had only come here because the other party had said this. But for some reason, he currently held a vacuum cleaner in his hand.

It was a holiday morning.

"Uh....."

Layfon suddenly turned around and mumbled.

There was something very important - the flake that entered his room had said this, so Layfon had rushed over here. However, he currently held a vacuum cleaner in his hand and was vacuuming the floor, what was going on?

What had happened? Layfon couldn't really figure out what he was doing.

The thing he couldn't understand wasn't the reality that he was cleaning, but rather why he was cleaning in the first place.

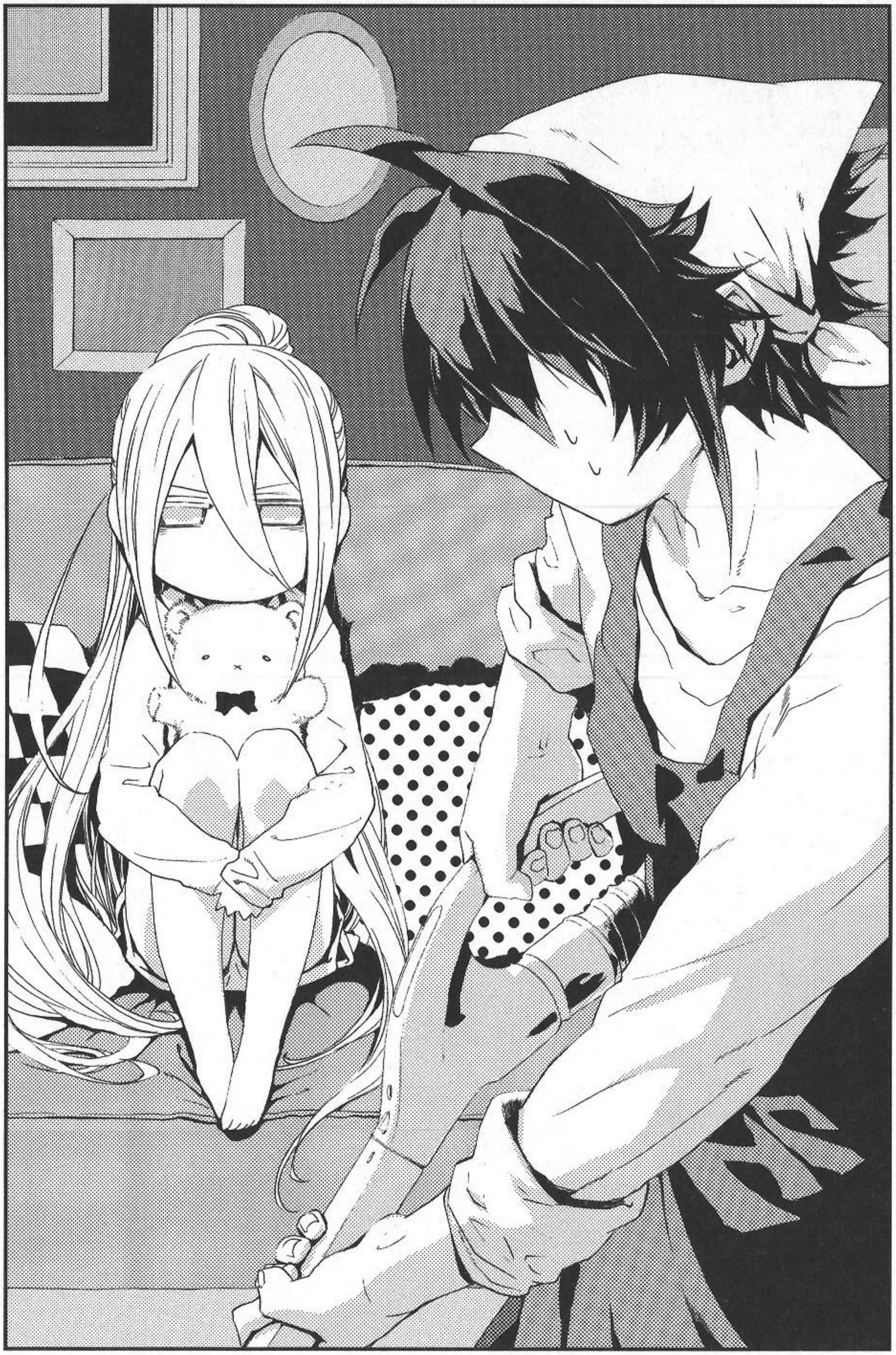
"Excuse me....."

With at polite intonation, Layfon queried the person who might be able to answer him.

"What is it?"

The other party casually replied, and Layfon didn't know if that was good.

That person was wearing a loose shirt and shorts, and held her knees sitting on the sofa viewing Layfon's appearance as he cleaned.



"Why am I cleaning here?"

"You're unwilling?"

"Huh?"

"You're unwilling to clean my room?"

"Ah, that's not it. I don't care about the cleaning....."

"Then isn't it fine?"

"Uh, you could say that."

What Layfon wanted to ask was 'why', the important part wasn't whether he liked it or not.

But, Layfon didn't have the courage to face that question.

More importantly, Layfon felt that today's Felli was moodier than usual.

To put it differently, she felt very impatient.

Even the clothes she wore were the same; judging from her everyday behavior, she would never wear something like this. Since Felli had moved to this apartment building in the Warehouse District and had become Layfon's neighbor, Layfon understood something, which was that she would usually be dressed neatly in

front of him. Layfon had many times before seen Nina, Meishen, and Claribel's sleeping clothes, but had never seen Felli wearing sleeping clothes.

Layfon seemed to have only seen Felli wearing her uniform or outside clothes [1].

Perhaps what Layfon thought of as outside clothes might be Felli's home clothes.

(After all, she's a wealthy person.)

What he meant was the Felli's family was very wealthy.

Layfon didn't really understand why Felli had moved to this apartment. He always felt that even if Felli wanted to reduce her rent, she shouldn't have a reason to reduce it to this level.

But, he didn't dare to ask her this question.

For some reason, Layfon felt that this seemed to be a landmine that he couldn't ask.

Even though Layfon was currently cleaning, Felli's room wasn't really dirty. She usually kept her room clean.

Felli didn't want Layfon to help her do big cleaning, but had really half-forced him to do ordinary cleaning work.

(???)

Speaking of Felli, she sat on the sofa looking at her own toes. What was she thinking?

Moreover, Layfon also noticed her impatient appearance.

(Did I make her mad?)

Layfon was in a perplexing situation, and had been forced to clean the living room and corridor.

"Um, I've finished cleaning....."

"....Thanks."

Layfon cautiously and warily opened his mouth to speak, and as expected Felli unhappily raised her head to look at him.

"Uh, what next?"

"I don't want to do anything at all today."

Felli said this with a volume even lower than usual.

"Oh....."

Layfon looked at the window. Layfon had just been using the vacuum cleaner to vacuum the floor, so he opened the window, and the hot and humid summer air flowed into the room via the window. Felli's fingers impatiently tapped something. Layfon stole a glance. It had been the remote of the room's air conditioner.

Layfon closed the window, and buttons were rapidly pressed, cool wind beginning to circulate around the room.

"Is it because the weather's hot?"

"How could that be?"

The cool wind let Felli show a relieved expression, but as Layfon asked this, she once again became unhappy. He had spoken wrongly - Layfon thought this, but Felli didn't continue speaking, so he thought that perhaps Felli really wasn't that unhappy.

But, what was going on?

"I don't want to do anything."

"......Then what should I do?"

Felli once again expressed this, so Layfon opened his mouth to ask.

In other words, Felli wanted Layfon to do something. Though he didn't know the reason she wasn't happy, in general the situation was like this.

Layfon didn't have much to do today. Since the situation was like this, he would just follow Felli's instructions.

"Uh, right now should be about time for lunch, right? Is there anything you want to eat?"

"Something not hot."

"Understood."

Layfon went to the kitchen to check ingredients, returned the cleaning supplies back to his room, and began making Italian noodles.

From then onwards, he coped with Felli's capricious requirements, all the way till nightfall.

For a Military Artist, labor like moving furniture wasn't tiring; however, moving furniture back and forth without a clear requirement would make one's heart feel tired.

"That's enough, please put everything back."

Felli said this at the end, and Layfon only felt extremely powerless.

"Nn-"

"What?"

Felli still occupied the living room sofa. Layfon looked at her, and silently nodded his head.

Afterwards, he moved the furniture back to their original position.

An awkward atmosphere arose in the air.

In this kind of atmosphere, Layfon put the furniture that he had just moved around back to its original place. Because of the furniture moving, the dust that hid in the corners had scattered about, and Layfon once again took up the vacuum.

When the cleanliness of the room was once again restored, the hands of the clock already pointed to a position of nightfall.

"Then....."

As he collected the vacuum, looking around the restored room, Layfon let out a breath. He estimated that the room had become spotless, without half a speck of dirt.

Felli who had sat on the sofa till the end, other than when she ate, finally stared at the wall with an unhappy face.

"What else do you want me to do? Do you want me to make dinner?"

"What are you saying?"

Felli turned her head, seeming surprised.

"Huh? Because it's almost time to eat dinner."

"That's not what I meant....."

At that moment, even Layfon who was usually said to be slow understood the meaning behind those words.

Could it be that you aren't mad? That was definitely what Felli wanted to ask.

"Ahah, uh... nn..... I'm a little angry, but I think that's it."

"You think.....?"

"Before we had a rule that even if we quarreled we couldn't forbid the other person from eating, so I'm automatically like this."

Layfon meant the orphanage. In the environment of the orphanage, since the one who controlled the kitchen naturally wielded power, forbidding other people from eating was banned to avoid dictatorship.

This kind of rule had already entered Layfon.

Of course, even if Layfon didn't make dinner, Felli also had money, and had the means to move. She could bring food back to eat, and could also dine out.

But, today Felli didn't have the energy to go out.

"Hah....."

Deeply sighing, Felli's entire body collapsed on the sofa.

"What do you want to do?"

Layfon tried asking. Afterwards, she raised her head in surprise
.

"Why do you ask?"

"Uh, how should I say it, it's because Felli's giving out that kind of feeling....."

Thinking of how he should express himself, Layfon looked at the ceiling.

Then, he thought of what he should say.

"The night before a test, even though there's no reason, you'll suddenly feel like you want to clean or organize things, right? What Felli gives off is the same feeling as that kind of time."

There was something that had to be done. But, even if it were possible one really didn't want to do it. Because one couldn't feel determined, he always turned his thoughts to other things.

Layfon felt this from Felli.

"What night before a test..... how rude."

Felli said this, but her words didn't have any force.

"I'm always in your care, so I feel it wouldn't be bad if I could do something like that to make your mood better....."

".....I see. It's happy that you can understand to that degree."

Felli replied feebly.

"Then, let's first eat dinner. Do you have anything you want to eat?"

"That... Then, let's eat something filling and easy to digest."

"That request is pretty difficult."

"Since I don't know if it will be a long war or a quick fix..... I hope I can be in my best condition."

"I see....."

Even if Felli's face had almost no emotions, he strongly felt the emotion contained in those words. In order to respond to her expectations, Layfon began thinking.

A light vegetable soup with bread..... after thinking this, the necessary ingredients emerged in Layfon's mind one by one.

"Thought the ingredients for soup are enough, we don't have bread, I guess I'll go get some soon....."

After saying this, Layfon quickly chopped vegetables, getting the materials ready for soup.

"Then, I'm going to buy bread, please look after the pot. Just turn off the flame when it's almost boiling."

Leaving these words, Layfon left the room.

Felli didn't even have time to respond.

"Really....."

Left alone in the room by Layfon, Felli sighed, and then looked at the kitchen.

"He really is very slow, being messed around with like this and not getting mad."

Felli didn't want Layfon to get mad. But, seeing himself being so humiliated, what would he think? Felli quite wanted to know.

".....I don't really need to do this, huh?"

Felli didn't think she understood everything about Layfon. However, until today she hadn't had any reason to test Layfon's ' Mister Nice Guy' personality, right?

But even so, the outcome of testing was somewhat different from her predictions. How Felli had thought things would develop was..... Layfon would be perplexed to the end apologizing to her, but the result wasn't like that.

It was a misjudgment that made her happy.

"This is good, because I've already decided to walk that path with you."

After mumbling this, the ambiguous determination in Felli's heart had finally fallen in the right place.

That night she would challenge the deepest part of Delbone's legacy. [2]

She once again renewed her determination.

She should tell Layfon this over the dinner table.

If she did this, what kind of expression would he show?

"It'll be enough if he's thankful."

After Felli lightly mumbled this, she walked off from the sofa, moving towards the room.

She couldn't eat dinner dressed like this.

Chapter 1 - Her Determination

Though she couldn't see it, though she couldn't touch it, it was extremely important.

She only had to think about it, and her brain would heat up along with her heart feeling tight.

She wanted to treasure it, carefully preserving it.

Wanting to bury it deep inside her heart.

As if she were receiving an extraordinarily important treasure, she tightly locked it in a chest.

Very, very carefully.....

If their homes became closer, did that mean the time they spent together would increase? In reality this was not so.

The cake shop that she had opened became busy very early, and in order to get inspiration for new products, she spent more time

at night looking for new ingredients or checking out other stores. Still, her time at school naturally became time for the two of them to meet.

"In other words, the situation is the same as it was your first year."

"Umm....."

At Mifi's conclusion, Meishen could only emit a sorrowful noise .

Right now was lunch break. It was only Mifi and Meishen eating lunch together, as Naruki had been called over to do City Police work.

"Wait, has the time you two can be together become less?"

Her childhood friend looked around the classroom. With no way to refute it, Meishen also turned her head. In front of her gaze was Layfon's seat, but no one was in the seat.

Currently Layfon seemed to be busy with something. Never mind time after school, even during lunch break he was almost always outside and didn't stay in the classroom.

"I don't know if it's his expression or look, but don't you think the feeling that Layton gives off isn't the same?"

"Nn-"

It was vague, but Meishen also had this kind of feeling. She was the same as Mifi, not knowing how to describe that kind of feeling.

Layfon had found something to work hard at - perhaps it could be described like that, but Meishen also felt that it seemed like there was a difference somewhere.

Should it be said that it wasn't interesting, or that he was too desperate?

".....What's bothering him?"

"Ah, I don't know."

Mifi strongly nodded her head to Meishen's soft mumble.

"He feels like he wants to do something but he's not strong enough. I feel like Layfon's normal appearance is the same as before, looking like he doesn't have much leisure time. When he was in his first year, he didn't have much free time because of his work, but now I feel like his look has become different. Nn - it's really quite strange."

"Maybe something big has happened?"

Layfon was a Military Artist, and was in one of the numerous Military Arts branches, part of one of the elite platoons, the seventeenth platoon.

Even if he was with those people, he was still a person with outstanding combat abilities.

Seeing him desperate like this, one couldn't help but worry about whether something big had happened.

"That..... The attitude of the Student Council hasn't changed much, so I think it shouldn't be that."

Mifi worked as a reporter, so she was very clear about this information.

"Even if they were deliberately hiding it, I can vaguely feel whether things are like that by looking at the manner and expression of those important people. Also, I haven't seen the Student Council taking any peculiar actions."

"Really?"

Mifi's words let Meishen loosen her breath. She had felt that there might be a big commotion happening like last year, so she felt quite unsafe.

But, compared to this, more importantly.....

"Is Layton okay?"

Just looking at the previous year, after Layfon had done something, after showing an extremely troubled expression, he seemed to have received a very large wound.

Did he have some trouble hidden in his heart that he couldn't tell others? If it wasn't related to the Student Council, then what kind of situation was it?

"I can't help him, can I?"

Meishen tried saying it, but she didn't know if she could do anything for Layfon.

"You think that the time you spend with him will increase?"

"I didn't mean....."

After being asked sarcastically by Mifi, Meishen showed a worried expression.

If she said that she hadn't thought like that, Meishen would be lying. However, Meishen truly had always been looking for a storefront to open a cake shop. Though she had slightly adapted to interacting with strangers, she didn't think she could become a shop owner who could interact with many customers, and this was really why she had opened a cake delivery shop.

It was also the truth that she couldn't find a suitable storefront.

The reason that she couldn't find a storefront was also because she had to find a place that was close to the residence of her childhood friends who lived together.

If she was willing to move, then she could have found a suitable storefront. Since it wasn't based on attracting guests, the choice of a remote location wasn't important.

But then, she would be moving to a place inconvenient for Mifi and Naruki.

She didn't want to leave them.

In reality, this kind of feeling also hindered her search for a storefront.

So during the party celebrating Layfon's moving, although she had been influenced by that atmosphere to make her decision, Meishen still hadn't decided to live alone. Even now, she still didn't think she could make the right choices to solve the store's problems.

As for the cake shop, with the help of the worker who had arrived and who lived in the same apartment building, Vati Len, business begun quite smoothly.

However, Meishen thought that the opportunities for her and Layfon to meet had become less than before.

"That... Though only one year has passed, many things have changed."

Maybe she was too bothered to continue joking, as Mifi murmured with a serious face:

"The operational responsibilities assigned to me have increased, and Naruki should be the same."

"Nn."

Meishen also had her own store. For example, if she wanted to do this kind of thing in her home city, she would have to spend

much more time saving money. But, the system of the Academy city was very clear, and supported the students' doing what they wanted to do, so she was able to so quickly achieve her dream.

Anything could be attempted, as long as you desired it - This was the idea of the Academy City.

So, the students with goals quickly became very busy.

Meishen was like this, and Mifi and Naruki as well.

Layfon perhaps was also like this.

"But-"

"Nn?"

Mifi's word made Meishen raise her head.

"What Layton's doing seems very important, but it doesn't feel like he's unhappy, right?"

"......Maybe."

Meishen agreed with those words. That sentence also related with Layfon's expression that was different from normal, and made her feel that this answer was definitely not wrong.

"If things are like that, isn't it good for Layfon?"

"Maybe."

Mifi nodded her head, and and the two ate lunch without a topic for a while.

(But.....)

Meishen didn't know what Layfon was doing.

Because she felt that there was another, even greater worry. This wasn't what Layfon was doing, but concerned the results that would be produced by what Layfon was doing.....

This could only be described as a small, uncomfortable premonition, as if needles were deeply stuck inside Meishen's heart, and she couldn't pull them out no matter how she tried.

As to what Layfon who Meishen worried about was doing, he was currently training.

He was on the roof of the school.

It was training to use Sakkei while compressing his Kei flow. The so-called Kei concealment meant not letting Kei leak outside of the body. Compressing Kei in this situation would make the body

feel excess heat, but if one could keep from generating this excess heat while producing Kei, the most efficent chained Kei attacks could be produced.

If the speed at which Kei was produced increased, the speed of one's moves would increase as well.

Additionally, the speed of Composite Blast would increase.

Since he couldn't expect the capabilities of the Dite to increase, he could only review the way he used his Kei. His current method of use put an abnormally high burden on the Dite, but at the least now he wouldn't run into a situation where he would break the Dite before he could use a move.

Layfon kind of thought that he could not use the Dite altogether , and directly use Kei techniques.

But, the material properties and internal structure of the Dite allowed it to transform Kei in an efficient manner. If Kei techniques were used without this kind of ability, one simple techniques like burst Kei could be used.

Though it was a bit late to do it now, there were times when those techniques came in handy. But, one couldn't only rely on such a weapon to fight.

"I really am clumsy."

That kind of thought suddenly emerged in his mind, and Layfon sighed.

If something had to do with Military Arts, regardless of in what area, Layfon could use his genius to complement his weakness, but it could even be said the problem was that he had never thought about this. Layfon thought that his own strength was that he had many ways to respond in a critical situation, but now the number of ways that he could respond had become less.

For most Heaven's Blade successors, the number of ways that they could respond in an urgent situation wasn't that much. However, among those few options hid immense strength, and that was the reason they had the qualifications to become a Heaven's Blade successor.

Layfon had taken to heart Gildred's words that he was 'A kid who could only play genius'.

If someone wanted Layfon to select his most adept martial art, then as expected, he would still choose the sword. However, till today, Layfon had never thought of changing his fighting style to exclude the steel threads, because Layfon felt that the way he used steel thread techniques had already become part of himself.

However, if someone asked Layfon if he could rely on his steel thread techniques to confront Lintence, he would feel very worried .

"After all..... I should first strengthen Composite Blast. It would be good if my Kei flow was bigger."

Layfon decided on his next goal, but right now he sighed again. Compared to Dites, he would rather break through his body's Kei

limits. To do this, he needed to expand his Kei vein, which was essentially his Kei flow, but for the most part, all kinds of training would have no use regardless towards this.

"It's not easy to find a clue....."

Layfon sighed again.

Something appeared in front of him.

It was the empty city he had encountered during his previous mission and an old Military Artist named Gildred.

That old man was Nina's great-grandfather..... It seemed to be a more distant blood relation than her grandfather or an ordinary great-grandfather.

That person had tried to come to Zuellni, but Layfon and Nina had succeeded in stopping him, and along the way they had fought with unknown creatures that were possibly filth monsters.

Even though this kind of thing had happened, Nina still hadn't said anything.

However, Layfon began to think in a different way - perhaps she wasn't 'not speaking', rather 'she had no way to speak'?

"For you, this way of thinking might even be pretty smart."

Explaining his way of thinking to Felli after things had calmed down, she had said something like this.

"I'm very concerned about the creatures that appeared. According to your story, they not only can change their form at will, but every part of its mass possesses the ability to think independently. Perhaps the particles take the form of a creature as a group, and carry out their activities as a group organism."

".....Ah."

Layfon almost couldn't understand Felli's abstruse commentary, but 'group organism' let him think of a certain filth monster.

"Behemoth."

Back when he was in Grendan, when Layfon was still a Heaven's Blade successor, he had once faced an aged phase together with Lintence and Savaris, and Delbone had seemingly explained that filth monster this way at the time.

"So, since there's a precedent, then the creature that appeared before is most likely that kind of being. Therefore, we should imagine that being has the form of small particles, and there's the possibility that they are hiding in Zuellni doing surveillance."

"How could....."

"In our current situation we can't completely confirm this deduction."

Felli asserted this, and Layfon didn't possess any way to follow up with this way of thinking either.

"Since we might be under surveillance, we can't take any reckless actions or communications."

"Ah..... right."

"Then, maybe we should avoid talking about this topic."

"Okay."

"Right now is a time for us to watch the situation of the city and the Captain while accumulating strength."

Felli's words made Layfon spend days silently practicing.

For how long should he do this kind of thing?

During this situation to which he didn't know the answer, the city had somehow went into the summer period.

Layfon was somewhat impatient. However after careful thinking, Layfon saw the situation from a different angle. In reality , this kind of pressure was the same as the time in Grendan when he didn't know when filth monsters would attack next, the same as the situation when he could only practice Military Arts every day.

After thinking that, Layfon's heart suddenly calmed down. Doing things with a runaway heart would only lead to continuous defeats, a lesson Layfon had already learned from the things that happened last year.

"The important part is thinking that way."

Layfon compressed his Kei while murmuring this. His current task was to find out how much Kei he could compress while keeping the Military Arts student in the school building from noticing his Kei.

Using Sakkei while creating Kei flow was like blowing air into a balloon. Sakkei was the balloon, and the Kei flow was the air. Within the acceptable range of the balloon, one could endlessly blow air. Even though the balloon became large, as long as the explosive noise of the balloon breaking didn't sound out, no one would perceive the balloon's existence.

In other words, how much air could be blown in without the balloon breaking? How fast should air be blown into the balloon? Could he raise the strength of the balloon? Layfon thought of these things as he let the balloon inflate.

This was what was meant by using Sakkei while creating Kei flow.

"How should I do this....."

He once again murmured.

Nina had been involved in some problem, and he already knew that this problem was quite significant.

However, the problem hadn't shown its true appearance.

But, by using his mentality from his time in Grendan, looking at the situation from a different angle, he had unexpectedly been able

to eliminate this impatience. The abilities of aged phases were various, and had great differences from each other, so he would often only know the strength of his opponent after encountering them.

Thinking carefully, not knowing the actual situation of his opponent was normal.

Nina was here. Then, perhaps enemies would appear here in a day, or perhaps Nina would leave here in a day.

"If that happens, I can only go with her....."

He mumbled this.

Afterwards, a small doubt appeared in his heart.

That doubt was, why did he go to this kind of degree?

Did he have a reason to do this kind of thing for Nina?

"What should I say?"

He didn't really understand.

However, Layfon couldn't just give up on Nina. Just thinking of that made him feel pained.

Was it because he was too good of a person?

"She's done a lot for me."

When he had just come to Zuellni, he had completely lost his confidence as a Military Artists. Though it wasn't intentional, Nina had strongly brought Layfon back to his role as a Military Artist, and many things had happened. In the end, many knots had been untied.

Thought new problems had emerged, they were all Layfon's own problems, and Nina wasn't the reason.

Because Nina was here, Layfon had maintained his position as a Military Artist.

"I can't give up on her."

Layfon once again murmured.

"......Though, nothing has happened."

Though he said this, after he came back from the battle in that empty city, the season had already changed. After that no obvious changes had occurred, no filth monsters had even attacked, and the time passed by very smoothly.

Perhaps this way of life was only ordinary for an Academy City . However, to Layfon who had grown up in Grendan and passed many restless days, this kind of peaceful time let him feel somewhat impatient.

"But, in reality this is the best, right?"

Could he really be only the kind of person who wasn't used to those lines? This kind of uncertainty flitted through Layfon's mind

for a moment. It wasn't because Layfon was preparing for some big event, but because of the environment of his birth.

Though, right now there was still something to be cautious of.

It was Felli.

Two days before, she had indicated that she wanted to challenge Delbone's legacy.

After that, she had not left her home.

"She's okay, right?"

Thinking of this, he felt tense.

As a precaution, Felli had given the room key to Layfon to keep, so he went to quietly see Felli's situation.

Felli slept on the bed.

Even if he opened his mouth and cried out he wouldn't get a response. Her breathing was very quiet, and expression and body temperature were very normal.

Felli had said that Delbone's legacy was her battle experience.

Layfon had never heard of Psychokinesists being able to exchange experiences like physical data. So, perhaps this was something only Delbone could do.

Then, it was only because it was Felli that she could receive her experiences.

Therefore, it was only Felli who could carry on her resolve and inherit her challenges.

As to what consequences this action would bring, only Felli herself knew.

Regardless of success or defeat.

"In terms of speed, it might be over quickly. But, if the time is prolonged, there may be big differences produced between my mind's sense of time and the world's time. So, it's possible that I will enter a sleep-like state for a long time."

Before challenging her legacy, Felli had mentioned the dangers of it. Hearing this, Layfon only felt that the blood in his entire body had frozen, and he even tried to talk Felli out of it.

However, Felli didn't stop.

"Though I expect the information contained in Delbone's legacy to be the key to our current problem, since she said this was empirical battle data, perhaps I can't hold great expectations of this ."

"In that case....."

"But, even only being able to achieve her experience as a Psychokinesist is extremely worth challenging this."

At Felli saying this, Layfon had no words to respond.

It wasn't wrong to say this.

Because, Layfon had never heard of a Psychokinesist above Delbone. Fighting from before Layfon existed, she had always held the identity of a Heaven's Blade successor protecting Grendan, and went through countless battles.

Felli said she could achieve this kind of experience. If Layfon was a Psychokinesist, he would definitely want it.

But, Felli.....

"Right, Felli, didn't you want to give up your identity as a Psychokinesist?"

"Is the current situation one where I can give up?"

".....No."

"Since I can't give it up, I want to have the peak as my target. The key reason is close by, so even if there are some risks, I feel that it's worth trying."

Layfon couldn't continue rebuking Felli's words.

So, Layfon could only worry and be anxious. He couldn't even focus well on maintaining his Sakkei, and spoke to himself regarding the memories continually spinning around in his head.

"But, I feel that it would be better to stop."

He tried mumbling this to his memories. The residual memories left inside his head and his imagination produced developments, and because of this sentence a Felli with her eyebrows creased appeared in front of Layfon's eyes.

He felt that he couldn't even save the Felli who had appeared from his imagination.

"Maybe it's true."

If that were so, then it would have been better if he hadn't asked Felli for help in the first place. If he hadn't said anything to Felli, then perhaps she would have already turned from Military Arts to another department.

Now liberated from her brother's chains, in order to experience new things, perhaps she would have done that.

The one who obstructed her was Layfon.

"Aah, it really is!"

It was because he had said those things, that Felli had helped him to this degree.

After thinking this, the sinful feelings produced made Layfon feel quite uncomfortable, and the doubt 'How nice that you're doing this kind of easy training' emerged in his heart at the same

time. Doing this level of training, achieving no progress or what couldn't be called progress, was that really good? He couldn't stop wanting to ask himself.

Layfon couldn't stop his remorse, and facing Felli who had challenged the legacy and was still in a sleep-like state, he felt even more guilty.

However, he didn't have anything else he could do.

".....Did the Captain also have these kinds of feelings before?"

What Layfon meant was Nina that they had barely met. Up to last year, because of the poor performance at the Military Arts Competition, the number of selenium mines Zuellni possessed had reduced, and the city's existence was facing a crisis. In order to find ways to solve this predicament, Nina established the seventeenth platoon and endlessly struggled, and had desperately trained her Military Arts with a feeling unlike now.

The destination was clearly there, but because her strength was too weak she couldn't arrive there. The Nina at that time had exuded this kind of impatient feeling from her whole body.

The feeling that seemed like she couldn't complete some goal had always been there. Now she wasn't focused on becoming a strong Military Artist like Layfon and was focused somewhere else , making Layfon feel impatient, and she hadn't told Layfon what he should do.

Last year's Nina had a mission as if she had to do something, single-mindedly charging forward for it.

Like last year's Nina, the current Layfon also felt as if he had to do something.

Other than increasing his power as a Military Artist, Layfon felt that he had to do something else.

But, he didn't know what he should do.

Layfon had to become strong, because he had already decided that he would help Nina who had been involved in some big event .

"......Is it only that?"

So he had to become strong.

Layfon was clear that in the end he would return to this conclusion, but when he thought again, he noticed he was still pondering it.

"Hahhh, I really am too indecisive."

Layfon let out a sigh while he trained. There was an ambiguous feeling in his heart that made him unable to quickly reach a conclusion. What was the mystery blocking Nina from moving forward after all, and what would happen next?

Was this related to Grendan?

In other words, related to Leerin.....

".....Hahhh."

His mood was so heavy that he lost his focus.

"Lunch break will be over soon."

Only as he said this did Layfon notice that he had not eaten lunch. Since had thought of this method of training during class, he hadn't been able to stop wanting to hurry up and try it, so he had trained till now on an empty stomach.

"Ahh, what should I do?"

Moreover it seemed like he had left his bento in the classroom.

"I wonder if I'll be able to make it if I go get it now?"

From here he could clearly see the clock tower in the middle of the Student Council building.

Layfon looked at the clock, and there wasn't much time left. If he went to get it now, the senior lecturer could just then walk into the classroom.

"No, after all I'll go to the canteen to buy something, and I guess I'll wait till after school to eat the bento? Ahh, but maybe the canteen's sold out."

After considering the situation of the canteen near the second-year building, Layfon let out a pondering sound. In this Academy City, not only were the customers students, but the shop owners were also students. The stores that did business during classtime were few.

Therefore, he should skip class altogether..... That choice tugged at Layfon's heart. If he went downtown, he could find a store that was in business, because the demographic there was upperclassmen whose classtimes were rather free. Though if the underclassman Layfon were dining in that kind of place during classtime, it would be very easy for him to draw their attention.

"Hahhh..... Can I only tolerate it?"

Though he could eat something as soon as class ended, once he thought of how he would have to listen to class with a hungry stomach, Layfon felt dismayed.

".....Huh?"

Just then, Layfon noticed there was someone walking up to the roof. His hearing that was heightened because of his training heard footsteps walking up the stairs.

It was a sound he had heard before.

"Meishen?"

Judging by the footsteps, she was walking quickly.

She couldn't have come here to look for him, right? Though Layfon thought so, he still paid close attention to the sound of these footsteps, so he stopped maintaining his Sakkei, and slowly released the Kei he had gathered towards the sky.

Doing this would allow him to not be noticed by other Military Artists as he handled this Kei flow that could only be released outside his body.

The sound of the footsteps reached the roof.

"Ah, Layton, you really were here."

"Huh?"

Meishen showed a surprised expression. But at her saying this, Layfon was also surprised.

"Huh? You were looking for me?"

"Nn. Because you left your bento in the classroom. I thought you would return to get it right away, but you didn't."

The bento in Meishen's hand made Layfon's eyes light up.

"Wow, thanks. I forgot to take my bento, and I was just thinking about how to deal with lunch."

"Really, then that's great."

"Ah yes, how did you find me?"

Layfon asked this of Meishen who had relaxed her breath.

Judging by Meishen's tone, she knew that Layfon was here.

But until just now, Layfon had been carrying out his training while using Sakkei.

There shouldn't be anyone able to feel his presence.

"Vati told me."

"Vati, huh?"

Vati Len, a new student this year who lived in the same apartment building, as well as a worker at Meishen's shop.

"But, how would she know?"

She was a first-year student, and at this time she should have no reason to appear in the second-year building.

"Just as I was going out to find you, I ran into her. So she told me about it."

"Oh."

Layfon nodded his head, but didn't understand.

"Was I seen while I was there?"

Though Layfon cared about it, perhaps it wasn't something worth studying. Even if his presence wouldn't be felt by others, it

didn't mean that his body would be hidden. Perhaps she had just seen him. Moreover she could have had some business in the second-year building, and seen Layfon walking up to the roof preparing to carry out his training.

In the end, Layfon's current priority was his appetite. He sat on the ground, preparing to eat the bento that Meishen had brought.

"Layfon, did you make today's bento?"

"Since I made too much dinner, I made this bento almost entirely from the leftover ingredients."

Since his life semi-cohabitating in the apartment, the opportunities for Layfon and Meishen to make dinner for the others had increased.

When Layfon cooked, he had the bad habit of cooking too much , so the dinner table would often have leftovers. But Layfon would always make the leftover dishes into bentos for the next day, so they had never thrown away the leftovers that they couldn't eat.

"I haven't been preparing bentos for you much recently, I'm really sorry."

"How can that be, I was just too dependent on you last year."

If she had time, Meishen right now would still make bentos for Layfon, but the occurrences weren't as frequent as during their first year.

"You're very busy right now, it's not your fault."

Every morning Meishen seemed to be busy managing the work at her cake shop, and it would be a mistake for him to expect her to prepare bentos for him like before.

"It's surprising that you still make me bentos. You're really amazing."

"It's only extra that I made while preparing bentos for myself."

"That's still very amazing."

These were Layfon's true feelings. Meishen seriously confronted the things she wanted to do, and didn't try to escape from the things she wasn't good at. Meishen had only hidden behind the backs of her childhood friends in her first year, but now lived on her own, and had her own store.

"Meishen is very amazing, how could it be otherwise!"

"That's not....."

Meishen went silent with her whole face red; that was her right from her first year.

However, during her work at the cake store, Meishen's eyes gave off a different radiance. As she did things with all of her heart , it produced a kind of feeling that could be enjoyed from the bottom of one's heart.

It made Layfon feel very envious.

From his first year, Layfon had envied Meishen who knew what she wanted to do. Moreover she had also actually advanced towards her goal. Layfon didn't only feel envy, but also felt happy for Meishen as if it were himself.

"I also have to work hard."

"I think Layfon is trying very hard."

"Thanks."

Layfon felt very happy that Meishen could say this.

But, though the training to become strong was important, he couldn't only put his gaze above.

"The important thing is why I'm becoming strong."

Meishen tilted her head showing a puzzled expression, and Layfon smiled at her.

At that time, the sound of the clock declaring the end of lunchtime rang out, and the two hurriedly left the roof.

Layfon's praise made her quite happy.

But, the sentence that he had casually said, 'I also have to work hard', seemed quite serious.

"What is it?"

School was already over, and Meishen was in her shop. The important business of this store was to send desserts to affiliated stores, and though this work was completed in the morning, it didn't mean the work in the store would end just like that. The store was also connected to the district, and would also have customers enter.

The fame of Meishen's store had spread to the students working in the Warehouse District, so though there weren't many, there were still customers who came to buy cakes, or directly ate here.

But right now, there were no customers at all in the store.

Even the apartment residents and childhood friends who would come over whenever they had the chance hadn't come.

So, Meishen stared blankly with nothing to do. At that time, Vati had asked such a thing of her.

"Eh? Ah, huh?"

"The cleaning outside is finished."

"Ah, s, sorry. Thanks for your work."

"No, it's no problem, I had nothing to do anyway. More importantly, how is manager?" [3]

Though Vati was very pretty, her face had no emotions and her tone was very serious, so one could easily feel that she was unapproachable.

"Uu, sorry."

Meishen was already used to her attitude, so she normally wouldn't think of it. But, the sense of guilt of being dazed during work made the oppressive feeling that Vati gave off become even heavier, and this pressure almost crushed Meishen.

"Please don't mind. More importantly....."

"Huh? Ah, Did I say something?"

"No, it seemed like manager was contemplating something."

"Huh? Ah, ah, that..... thinking of new products....."

Meishen tried finding an excuse, but her voice grew quieter as she spoke.

However, this kind of reason wasn't good enough for a girl like Vati.

"No, it felt somewhat different from that."

"Huh? T, there's nothing like that....."

"No, it wasn't manager's expression while thinking of new products. When manager is thinking of new products....."

Speaking to her, Vati suddenly lost her normal cold expression. She relaxed her face, her mouth spread apart slightly, and showed an absentminded look that wasn't looking at the ceiling, though her gaze slanted upwards.

How to describe it, this expression looked a bit..... blank.

The moment Meishen thought this, Vati had restored her normal expression.

".....If that kind of expression continues for ten minutes or more, the next day has a seventy percent chance of a new product appearing."

"Au!"

Never mind the expression, once she thought of other people seeing herself actually making this face, Meishen was embarrassed enough to want to die.

"So what manager was just thinking of wasn't testing products."

".....Yes, you're right."

Meishen slightly raised her hands as if completely surrendering.

".....Is it something you can't say?"

"Ye~s ....."

"If it is, then I've been too careless. Sorry."

"......It's a little hard to explain."

Though her mouth said this, her tongue thought about weaving the situation into words.

Even if she looked outside, it seemed like there wouldn't be customers entering.

Meishen spoke of what had happened during lunchtime.

Layfon seemed to be secretly planning something, and his expression was different from before.

Moreover he seemed like he would leave this place and go somewhere far away.

"Go somewhere far away?"

"Ah, I don't know the reason. Yes, I can't really make sense of it myself."

Meishen also felt confused about the words that she had blurted out.

However, she didn't want to deny her way of thinking. It would be better to say that this way of thinking had quietly entered Meishen's heart, and embedded itself inside.

Yes, she felt that Layfon seemed like he wanted to go somewhere far away.

"Ah, I don't think he wants to leave Zuellni."

Yes, the situation wasn't like that.

"......How should I say it?"

Meishen didn't have any way to explain it more clearly. Just from looking at Layfon, a strange kind of lonely emotion would emerge inside her, so she had used 'Layfon wanted to go somewhere far away' to describe the feeling.

"Ah....."

"What is it?"

Meishen thought of what Mifi had said around noon.

"Is that it?"

Many things had changed. Just like Meishen having her own shop, just like the increasing responsibilities the editorial department had assigned to Mifi, just like the increased work that Naruki had with the City Police.

Layfon had also changed towards some direction.

"......It can't be, I don't want him to change, maybe?"

Perhaps it was like that.

"But, it's really....."

"....manager."

"Ah, I'm sorry."

Meishen had been immersed in her thoughts, and had completely forgotten she was talking with Vati.

"Are you alright? You look pale."

"Eh? Really.....?"

"Resting a bit would be a bit....."

"That's true, since there are no customers right now, I'll sit down for a bit."

"I'll go get something for manager to drink."

"Yes, please."

With a smile, Meishen watched Vati walk to the kitchen.

(I don't want him to change.)

The words that boldly emerged made the imaginary needles that had stuck in her heart become larger and dig deeper.

Meishen could only feel dazed, as if she felt that kind of pain.

Tonight it was Meishen's turn to make dinner.

Vati had insisted that Meishen should rest today, even though she said that she was fine. In the end, Vati had somehow ended up helping Meishen make dinner.

"What should I make?"

"That..."

After Meishen said the menu, and after Vati nodded her head and said 'I understand' with the usual expressionless face, she nimbly took out the ingredients from the fridge.

"That....."

"It's enough for manager to supervise the flavor, please allow me to handle the rest."

"Th..... thank you. Uh, but is this okay?"

"It's for manager, and I might as well say that if it's not like this my heart would feel uneasy."

"......Sorry."

"Don't worry about it."

Vati who wore an apron talked as she smoothly lined up the ingredients, then took up the kitchen knife to handle them.

The two of them smoothly prepared dinner like this, and the speed of completion made Meishen stare in surprise.

"Amazing."

"I referenced the movements of manager in the kitchen."

"Huh? But I only made sweets and cakes in the shop kitchen..... "

"For the most part it's the same."

"Oh....."

Meishen could only give praise.

"Though I've thought this before, Vati's really amazing."

"That's not so, I'm only good at imitating other people. Is the flavor alright?"

"Eh, ah..... Nn, add a little more salt and it'll be fine."

"According to manager's preferences, I thought this much would be about right."

"Yes. But Layton and the others are Military Artists right? They exercise a lot, so..."

"I see."

"It's like that, sorry to bother you."

Being stared at by Vati made Meishen feel very embarassed. In order to avert the other party's attention, she showed a smile.

"I understand."

Vati finished the preparation according to the instructions.

After the cooking was finished, Vati collected the kitchenware to the point where Meishen could barely express her level of gratitude, and then left the room without saying a word.

"Hahhh..... If only I could do things as skillfully as her."

Seeing Vati like that, Meishen produced that kind of thinking from the bottom of her heart. She not only looked beautiful, had excellent grades, and had no problems with athletics, but moreover she could do house chores.

Though she had the shortcoming of a cold attitude, this was only because she lacked expressions, and in reality her heart was very tender.

".....Hah, I'll work hard."

What should she work hard at? Meishen herself wasn't too clear , but her spirit still rose automatically.

Just then.

"What are you doing!"

"Hyaa!"

The urgent voice coming from the door made Meishen shrink her body.

".....What is it?"

If she wasn't wrong, the voice's owner was Nina.

"Captain, what.....?"

Thought the sound that entered her ears next was muffled, the one who spoke it was Layfon.

After that no more sounds entered the room, so Meishen timidly went to the entrance and opened the door.

That scene was staged at the stairs.

"Huh?"

Layfon and Nina who should have been walking up the stairs had their heads raised looking at the top of the stairs.

Moreover Vati's figure was standing at the stair landing, and she held Felli to her chest.

"Captain, please calm down."

Nina's body still emitted killing intent, and Layfon who was completely confused spoke to her.

"How can I calm down!"

Then, giving off incredible anger, Nina glared at Vati.

What exactly had happened, and what was the situation right now? Meishen once again looked at Vati.

Vati was kneeling on the floor, and the unconscious Felli was in her arms. Her face was expressionless as usual.

"......Loss-senpai's body was not suited to walking down the stairs, and fainted here. I was only thinking of looking after her."

"Yes, could it be that Captain thought Vati-san was doing something?"

"But..... This person!"

This person was what? However, Nina showed an expression as if she were biting the bullet and quieted down, and the words afterwards could not be heard.

Just then.....

"Waah! What are you guys doing!"

Was it by chance? A new person let out a cry as if she were going to charge over, and without hesitation came from behind and grabbed Nina.

It was Claribel. With a pale face she said to Nina:

"Wait wait wait, you're too excited, Nina."

"But! This person made Felli-! To Felli.....!"

"It's okay. Nothing has happened, nothing has happened! Isn't that right?"

That last sentence was directed to Vati.

"Of course. Loss-senpai's body temperature and pulse are sufficient to maintain the normal state of her vital functions, but her body seems to be in a state of extreme fatigue, and it seems best to immediately send her to the hospital."

"See! See! Right now isn't the time to do this kind of thing!"

"Mu, gu, uu!"

"Layfon-san, please take Felli-senpai back."

"Ah, ah..... yes."

Layfon climbed the stairs with a puzzled face, and received Felli from Vati's hands.

Yes, it was at that moment.

Meishen forgot how abnormal the current situation was.

At that moment she only had that face in her mind.

Layfon's face.

The face of him lowering his head to look at Felli after he took Felli from Vati's hands.

He worriedly gazed at Felli.

This was obviously his normal response, but at that time, the expression that appeared on his face in that moment, though at first glance it seemed the same as normal, it produced an unexpectedly different feeling in Meishen.

Was this a misunderstanding, was she just guessing?

She was thinking too much - wasn't that kind of conclusion good?

But, even if she was proud of that conclusion, who was she trying to fool?

Fool herself?

Fraudulent.

It was as if the pain from the needles inserted in her heart grew stronger.

If that kind of paint wouldn't disappear, then whatever she said was meaningless.

"What should I do?"

What should she do about what? To whom?

Soon after, Meishen had already returned to the room. She hadn't escaped back to her room, but the her afterwards hadn't really been seeing anything.

She remembered that in order to send Felli to the hospital, Layfon and the others had gone to the hospital, and only Vati had stayed here. Claribel had apologized to Nina.

Meishen stood blankly, looking at the drama performed on the stair landing, and in the end she was the only one left.

Dinner was placed on the dinner table covered with a fresh cloth. Comparing the abundant preparations and the room's emptiness, Meishen intently gazed at the food.

"Ah, dinner..... what should I do?"

Meishen tried asking, but the answer didn't come to her immediately.

Instead, what appeared and endlessly spun in her mind was the scene that had just been performed, Layfon's face as he gazed at Felli.

"Why.....?"

What was it that had made her so shocked? What was it that she had seen?

No, she was very clear.

She didn't know the truth - put this pretense to the side, and recognize the truth that appeared in her heart.

In Layfon's eyes as he gazed at Felli, there seemed to be some special feeling. It wasn't a look given to a friend of classmate. The gaze he had given Felli hid various emotions.

She felt this way.

"I'm thinking too much, right?"

Her own answer was far too unreal, and made Meishen feel as if she had been completely defeated.

Meishen had seen all of the interaction between the two of them since last year. Meishen knew Felli was interested in Layfon, because she had admitted it to Meishen herself.

So, just Felli staying by Layfon made Meishen feel uncomfortable. In order to find a way to overcome this feeling, Meishen had worked hard in her own way to today. However, she had not thought of getting rid of Felli as a rival. She was sure she had never thought of it.

It wasn't because she thought of having a fair competition with her rival, only because she could never think like that.

.....Perhaps, this was only because Meishen didn't even dare elicit his hostility. Even so, she had dared to offer sacrifices to show that she didn't detest Felli. Shouldn't that be something worthy of praise? She thought so.

But, perhaps this was only because Felli wasn't brave enough to go on an offensive towards Layfon.

In other words, Felli was also a late bloomer in terms of love. Only because of this had Meishen felt that she didn't have any need to panic.

Meishen didn't know what she should do. At the least she should let Layfon know of her strong points. Meishen who had thought this worked hard to show off her cooking, but only doing this seemed to be insufficient.

The time continually passed, and changes happened every moment.

Among these changes, was there one where Meishen had been tossed back to her original position?

So, is that why things had become the way they were?

"I'm not..... thinking too much, right?"

Felli only had one thing that made Meishen feel scared and which also made her envious. Of course, Felli had her beauty and her excellent grades and other superiorities that made Meishen feel envious, but the thing that made her the most envious was the interaction between Felli and Layfon.

She could stay with Layfon in the place where he could become himself the most, the battlefield. It was something Meishen definitely could not do, and to Layfon, Felli would definitely become a very trustworthy individual.

But, even if she understood in her heart, Meishen could only helplessly watch the events unfold.

".....I can't do anything."

As a normal person, Meishen couldn't enter the battlefield. She didn't know what to do in order to fill this gap.

"Can I really do nothing?"

That face endlessly appeared in front of her. The face of Layfon gazing at Felli when she had lost her consciousness. However Meishen thought, she didn't feel that the expression that appeared on that face was only concern for a comrade.

Had Layfon been drawn in by Felli?

Or perhaps..... had they gone further.....?

Knock knock.

The sound of the door being knocked almost made her heart stop beating.

".....Huh?"

When she came back to reality, a long time had already passed. The sound of the door hesitated a bit before sounding again, and Meishen hurriedly walked to the door.

"Ah, sorry. You weren't sleeping by any chance, were you?"

It was Layfon.

"Huh? I..... I wasn't. Nothing like that."

"Oh, good. You worked hard to make dinner, but it was wasted.
"

"Its okay. Ah, come in..... Is Felli-senpai okay?"

"Nn, it's as Vati said, she's only a bit fatigued."

"......Did something happen?"

"Nothing like that. Seems like senpai was also doing something.
"

"Oh....."

Senpai was 'also'.

Meishen was already distressed to the point where she paid attention to trivial matters of this degree. In order to keep Layfon from seeing her emotions, Meishen worked hard to feign a concerned expression, and herself being this way made her feel quite miserable.

After bringing Layfon into the living room, even if she was unwilling, the food placed on the table greeted her eye.

"Right, have you eaten dinner?"

"Not yet....."

"Then you should eat here."

"Is that okay?"

"Nn, I'll go heat the food now."

Meishen had thought Layfon would return home in order to politely keep from disturbing her, but he hadn't done so. Meishen couldn't help but resent herself who didn't have the courage to open her mouth to tell him to go back home.

"Captain wants me to apologize for her."

"Huh?"

"For her not being able to come eat dinner, and for yelling at Vati."

"Even if you tell me this, I....."

"That's true, but I think Captain only wants me to say this for her."

"I guess so. But, has something happened to Nina-senpai as well ?"

"You really think something's weird?"

According to his words, Layfon also didn't know the situation?

"Captain seems like she's angry at Vati. Meishen, have you heard of Captain fighting with Vati?"

"Um, I haven't."

Meishen hadn't heard of anything unpleasant happening between Nina and Vati.

"Really, what's going on after all?"

Nina's actions made Layfon lost in thought, and right now there was no way to ask him about Felli.

After the food was reheated, Meishen and Layfon ate together. She had never experienced a dinner with such an awkward atmosphere, and didn't feel that she would be able to eat much.

However, in front of her was placed a great amount of unheated food. She had to think of how to deal with them.

"Right, about this food..."

Just as Meishen was thinking about what to do, Layfon opened his mouth to speak, perhaps perceiving her gaze.

"Huh?"

"When I returned just now, Captain, Clara, and I talked. Tomorrow morning, because of changing courses, the Military Arts department has a few extra free blocks."

"Nn."

"So they plan to borrow a practice battlefield from the school, so the three of us can carry out battle training."

"Ah, you're thinking of using this food to make bentos for that time?"

"Right, right! Can I?"

"Nn, it's okay. But I can't move them all myself."

"Yeah, sorry. I'll help bring them over."

"Nn."

The talk ended here.

After finishing the meal, Layfon indicated that he wanted to wash the dishes. After having some difficulty getting him to leave, Meishen finally relaxed her spirit.

However, the echo in her stomach didn't quickly disappear along with it.

"What should I do....."

Meishen mumbled.

Even if she muttered, she couldn't turn around the situation. But other than expressing her feelings, Meishen couldn't think of anything she could do to take out the boulder lodged in her heart.

She judged that errors had appeared in her actions.

Should she make corrections? Vati thought about it while lying on the bed in her room.

What she thought about was the event where she had approached Felli.

It had been incidental, indeed only incidental and nothing more .

Vati knew that since that day on, Felli had continuously been sleeping in her own room. Vati had tried diagnosing Felli, but didn't detect her having any symptoms of illness. But, she clearly had not used drugs, and the duration of her slumber had surpassed the necessary length for a healthy body. Since this kind of abnormal condition had emerged, Vati decided to continue observing Felli.

She didn't want an unfortunate accident to occur in this apartment building and produce unnecessary trouble for the people in it.

In the end, Felli's life wasn't in danger, so Vati decided to stop pursuing this topic, but Vati hadn't foreseen that Felli would have just woken up when she walked out of Meishen's room, and that Felli had left her room and walked down the stairs herself.

She was in a dream-like state. After accidentally meeting Vati on the stairs, Felli suddenly fainted.

This event happening on the stairs was very unfortunate. If Felli hadn't fainted on the stairs, Vati would have had the option of ignoring it. She knew that Nina and the others were nearby and about to return here, so she could have made this choice.

However, if Felli fell down the stairs and was injured because of this, the situation wouldn't be okay.

As a result, Vati caught Felli, and then was seen doing this by Nina.

She knew that Nina who knew her true form had seen this action.

So, Nina had showed that kind of attitude. This judgment was very correct, and Vati didn't want to see Nina take that kind of response, so she had avoided contact with her companions, but in the end-

"Things aren't going smoothly."

She couldn't carry out everything according to her plans.

However, she had also obtained response data outside of her expectations.

Meishen.

Vati's awareness focused on this response that was not normal and could bring about great changes tomorrow.

"What is it..... For what is she wavering?"

When she came in contact with Felli, Meishen's expression had taken a wavering attitude.

But, Vati didn't know the reasons for her indecision. In that scene, was there anything that could lead Meishen to become like that?

"Is it related to Layfon coming close to Felli?"

But, those two people often were near each other. Even if she had seen a menu of their contact, it still wouldn't constitute a reason for being indecisive.

".....Is there some kind of factor that I do not understand?"

Perhaps this was something that an inhuman, manufactured mechanical doll - a nano-celluloid interface - couldn't understand.

"Therefore, is this something that I am unable to know?"

Vati asked herself. If she asked herself and answered, the answer would be 'Because of that judgment, go learn'.

With what methods would she learn?

"I have to raise the level of my perception....."

Did she have to make further progress with some kind of data? In the course of her normal life, Vati at all times was perceiving the body temperature, breathing, heartbeat, pulse, and brainwave data of many types of organisms. She needed to collect some kind of data other than this? The current Vati didn't know the answer to this question.

"Does that mean that the next area is to understand organisms without only relying on data?"

Survival instinct and experience constructed the nerve networks of the brain, and peoples' emotions were only the responses to the chemical reactions that existed left and right, and love was only a response to promote the spread of genes.

"Therefore, there should be as many alternatives as needed."

It wasn't that humans couldn't be human.

From a man and a woman, a child could be created.

If it was only to leave behind a pair of genetic factors, it shouldn't matter who the other party was. If the meaning was just

to leave behind excellent genes, and compete with others to isolate excellent varieties, an unrestrained method should be more efficient, especially from the point of view of the woman. To men, the probability of leaving behind their genes could also go up, so this kind of method wasn't bad.

If the legal system and constructions of men hadn't produced ethics to negate this kind of thought, and people hadn't felt that this way of thinking was wrong, then in terms of humans, perhaps their survival ability wouldn't be as important.

"Because of this, the moat around reproduction has become deep."

To a manufactured doll, the meaning of this sentence was far too profound. She diffused in the simple bedroom, and then disappeared.

Though Layfon had gone to the hospital, Felli was still sleeping deeply. Had the legacy been successfully analyzed or not? Layfon couldn't learn from the still-sleeping Felli's mouth about how many results she had achieved.

The Medical Department student had said that they didn't need to worry once she regained consciousness.

In other words, they couldn't do anything about this condition of deep sleep?

Layfon was worried out of his mind. But, Felli had said to Layfon that this kind of thing wouldn't endanger her life, and wanted him not to worry.

"Even if she said that, I can't do so."

After being requested by Nina, Layfon brought her words to Meishen, and afterwards again returned to the hospital.

Layfon first returned to his room, and even rested for a while lying on his bed. But only when he came to, did he notice that he had changed his clothes and come here.

"......Even if I stay here, she's only going to be sleeping."

The big doors in front of the hospital had already closed. On the hospital grounds, Layfon had walked along the wall of the building, looking for a window that hadn't been closed.

There was one on the third floor. Layfon used Sakkei, and from there quietly slipped into the hospital. When Layfon and Nina had been wounded, they had once received treatment at this hospital, so even if the lights were turned down, he still mostly knew the floor plan.

Felli was in an isolation ward. Layfon took advantage of the nurse not paying attention, and stealthily entered the room.

As expected, Felli was still sleeping.

In the darkness, Layfon looked at Felli's face under the slight moonlight that came in from the window. Though he couldn't say that her sleep was very smooth, she didn't have any pained expression, nor had she become pale.

She only deeply slept.

"......Is she okay?"

Had she resolved the heritage, since she slept deeply as if recovering from an illness..... Felli had once woken up for a short time, so perhaps the situation was like this.

Or, she was still resolving the heritage to today?

"Is she still fighting?"

Regardless of the situation, it wouldn't change that she had fought, or the fact that she currently was fighting.

Moreover Felli's actions and words weren't for herself, but rather for Layfon.

"......It's really serious, huh."

Though he couldn't change this reason that made him look over his actions, Layfon didn't want to put anything into jeopardy.

"Captain is really amazing."

Nina who led subordinates into battle, and continued to move towards danger, did she always shoulder this kind of heavy burden on the battlefield?

No, not only her, other platoon captains were the same. Not only Military Artists, even Karian and Formed from the City Police were the same. Just by standing in their position, they had to bear this heavy burden regardless of the situation.

"Felli also puts in a lot of effort, so I have to work even harder."

He had to become stronger, even stronger.

He had to elevate the Compound Blast technique, developing Kei techniques that wouldn't create burdens on the Dite.

Layfon felt that he seemed like he had seen his goal, but.....

"It still seems a bit different."

He still lacked something.

"Tomorrow I'll be carrying out a slightly intense training with Captain and Clara."

For some reason, the tone that Layfon spoke with changed, as if he were chatting with Felli.

"They seem to have borrowed a practice battlefield. I'm not too sure how, but it seems like because of the person from our last mission, they borrowed a practice field. Though it seems like the person they negotiated with was Shin-senpai."

That two of them were looking for a training field with Claribel had reached Shin's ears, so he substituted for Gorneo to carry out negotiations with them.

"Captain has become strong, and of course Clara is also very strong. I feel that if I fight with them, perhaps I can find some inspiration from it."

This was Layfon's hope.

However, inside hid the strong mood of him wanting to do this.

"So that I don't lose to Felli, I will work hard."

After declaring this, Layfon jumped out from the window of the hospital room.

The next day, during class time before the lunch break.....

Layfon and the others were at the practice battlefield.

".....So this is also an experiment, is that okay?"

"Ah, okay."

When he arrived at the resting room, Harley had been waiting. He suddenly said this kind of thing, thrusting the new Sapphire Dite into Layfon's hand.

"The outside and the weight balance are the same as before, but the feeling inside might be slightly different."

"Is it because of the loops you talked about before?"

"Right right, it's the conversion loops. Kirik also did some research, but it seems like he can't make it for this training."

"Oh."

Though the fact that the feeling of using Kei might change made Layfon a bit uncomfortable, he also hoped that the Dite's strength could be upgraded. So, since Harley had spent his hard work, he should receive the results of his research like before.

More importantly, this way, Layfon still had to think about the possibility of his Dite breaking on the battlefield, so he had to be able to immediately adapt to the slightly different abilities of the Dite. He made this kind of conclusion quite simply.

"I've done this kind of thing before anyway."

"What? Is there something that you mind?"

Before becoming a Heaven's Blade, Layfon had once ordered a custom Dite from a different artisan. After coming to Zuellni, though Harley was the only developer, Layfon still used the Sapphire, Adamantium, Shim Adamantium, and the various improved versions of those Dites.

"No, I'm only a bit tense."

That kind of thing would happen sooner or latter, and moreover he was anxious to complete the Composite Blast move, so Layfon was a bit impatient.

"I get it, I get it, before making new attempts I always feel a bit impatient and uncomfortable."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah."

Harley said this, and Layfon felt that perhaps it really was the truth. In Grendan when he had been involved in underground matches, perhaps he had also been sensitive like he was now. Layfon at the time felt that it had been because he was weak and because he had been afraid, but in reality he had also been trying new things.

"As expected, it's different from right now."

"Huh?"

"Nothing, I was just thinking about things."

Subconsciously letting out a low mumble and a forced smile, Layfon left the resting room. Nina and Claribel should be in the other resting room preparing.

Layfon arrived at the practice battleground.

He looked at the spectator seats, and he could see Sharnid and Dalshena's figures, with the members of the fourteenth platoon that Shin led sitting in another area.

They hadn't participated in this training.

"They said this would be a special training....."

The two of them hadn't told Layfon details of the training.

However, Nina already could flexibly use the Haikizoku's power, and Claribel was still the granddaughter of the Heaven's Blade successor Tigris as well as the apprentice of the Heaven's Blade successor Troyatte. If he could train freely using the whole battlefield with them, just from this he should receive some inspiration, so Layfon didn't really care.

Sharnid wore his usual smile waving his hand toward him. Layfon raised his arm to him, surveying the practice battlefield. Traces of the last platoon match held here were left on the battlefield, but it hadn't been a match between Layfon's seventeenth platoon and the fourteenth platoon. Though the time was a bit late, this year's inter-platoon matches had already begun with a slow pace.

Layfon and the others in the seventeenth platoon had already undergone many battlefields, and moreover they had maintained their winning streak without any big difficulties.

"Ah....."

At that time, Layfon restored the Dite that Harley had given him in order to check it. Just then, Nina and Claribel's presences entered the field from the opponents' entrance.

"So the meaning is, Captain and Clara will join hands to fight me?"

Was that what was going on?

Layfon didn't mind, but he felt that then, it shouldn't have been a problem to tell him it was that kind of training beforehand, right ?

Just as he thought this, the Psychokinesis flake came over.

(Layfon, can you hear this?)

It was Nina's voice.

"Ah, yes."

Felli was still in the hospital; this was the flake of the fourteenth platoon's Psychokinesist.

(We're going to begin the training now, the format of the competition will be Clara and I facing Layfon.)

"I understand."

As expected, the situation was like that.

However, Nina's next sentence surprised Layfon.

(Regarding your weapon, I already spoke to Harley and asked him to remove the restriction on the steel threads.)

"Hah?"

(I received the permission of the Military Arts Head. Anyway, the restriction measure was the order of the previous Student Council President, so right now it's already invalid.)

"Ah, is that true?"

(But, the Military Arts Head has ordered again that you cannot use the steel threads during the Military Arts Competition and platoon matches.)

"That's right."

Gorneo definitely knew how shocking the power of the steel threads was. Moreover, the steel threads weren't as easy to install safety devices in as other weapons, so nothing could be done about them being banned.

"But, if I use steel threads....."

(Nn, we've already been wounded a million times.)

"That's true, but the wounds inflicted by steel threads aren't normal....."

The steel threads were thin, but if one concentrated, they weren't completely invisible. Honestly, if these two joined their powers, Layfon might end up beaten by them. Perhaps that was why the steel threads restriction had been lifted. However, if some situation happened when he didn't know the strength of his opponents, Layfon might be unable to stop his hands.

Thinking that an accident could happen, the battle could be a bit more relaxed if he didn't use the steel threads altogether.

(I already realized that.)

(If it lets me experience the feeling from before when my arm was cut off, I don't care.) [4]

After not only Nina, but Claribel also said that kind of thing, Layfon made up his mind.

"Letting you immediately experience the feeling from that time isn't easy....."

Only in order to rescue Leerin and Nina had Layfon made that momentous life-and-death decision.

That time's serious emotions couldn't be found in his current state of mind, but he had a different kind of toughness. Layfon thought so, and wanted to have confidence in it. However, it wasn't a toughness that would let him easily cut someone's arm off .

Though, he was afraid that the important point right now was something else.

"Since you and Captain don't mind."

He couldn't lose to Felli's hard work.

Nor to Gildred's words, 'Let this old man see what you can do'.

Layfon had drifted for a year through the Academy City. During this year, Nina had become strong enough to make one admire her position, and achieved a pair of strong Dites that could match her power. She had also begun being a part of a battleground that Layfon and others could know nothing of.

Nina's speed of advancement was this fast, and Layfon had practically been cast off behind her.

"Because to me, this battlefield doesn't seem relaxed."

Layfon already had been cast away by Leerin.

But, he didn't want to always be cast away. The battleground that Nina faced should be related to the battlefield of Leerin and Grendan.

"I'll come with full power."

For Nina who had let Layfon continue being a Military Artist in the Academy City.

And also for Leerin who continued to support him in Grendan.

Layfon couldn't let himself be cast off by others here.

(Good.)

Nina's voice that passed through the flake sounded quite satisfied.

(Sharnid will be managing the signal of the start of competition, and he'll coordinate with the time to give the signal.)

"Okay."

After replying, Layfon used Sakkei. He heard Sharnid who was sitting in the spectator seats let out an 'Ooh'.

His method of training that he had carried out after class while unnoticed by others seemed to raise his senses when he released Kei from his body. Though this kind of condition wasn't suitable for creating powerful Kei in an instant, it still had its places where it came in handy.

Moreover, doing this could also make it difficult for his opponents to interpret his position.

Layfon in his Sakkei state formed his Kei, diligently staying in his position. But, he once again confirmed the state of the new Dite that Harley had given to him.

Harley said he had altered the conversion loops. Indeed, the feeling of flow through this Dite didn't seem the same, but it didn't make this Dite hard to use.

To Military Artists who used weapons as part of their bodies, the conversion loops of the Dite counted as an existence like nerves or blood vessels.

Layfon didn't resist the new nerves, gradually getting accustomed to it.

"......Good."

His mumble sounded out, and Sharnid simultaneously gave the gunshot.

Layfon in his Sakkei state ran to the center of the practice field.

On the other side, huge Kei like a pillar of fire sprayed into the air.

This kind of Kei was Nina's.

"That's really full power."

Layfon involuntarily murmured.

The same as what he had felt in the empty city, Nina had definitely released the Haikizoku's power.

Nina's presence dominated the entire practice field.

"I can't interpret Clara's movements."

She should also be using Sakkei. But more importantly, Nina's presence was far too great, and it felt like it was going to obliterate everything.

"They can already work together?"

If it were like that, then all they had to do was rehearse their tactics before the battle. What Layfon cared about was what actions they would take next.

Layfon ran to the center while restoring the Sapphire Dite in its steel threads state. He pulled the Shim Adamantium Dite out of his weapon belt in its basic state, and gripped it tightly in his hand.

Layfon who moved towards the center changed his straight-line path to a zigzag. Though the steel threads had already spread out, Layfon had not flowed his Kei into them. Layfon ran while letting the steel threads droop on the ground, letting them bend around everywhere.

The huge Kei that Nina released still filled the entire practice field, shaking the air. On the other hand, Claribel's Kei still stayed hidden.

"How will they move?"

Layfon quietly whispered. The wound of the whisper was covered by the sound of footsteps, not to mention that Layfon had the steel threads crossed and spread in all directions, which were pushing back the surrounding vegetation nonstop. Perhaps the sound that was given out would let them see through Layfon's movement path, but the waves of Kei that Nina sent in all directions also made a different sound.

If the whisper produced a response, it indicated that Claribel was nearby, but from the look of it the situation wasn't like that.

Perhaps she had seen Layfon, and hadn't taken action?

Nina with a somewhat fast pace moved to the center of the practice field. From this, Layfon continued competing with

Claribel who was using Sakkei like he was, seeing who would interpret the opponent's movements first.

"Moreover my side also has a time limit....."

The reason Nina was using this kind of unhurried pace to advance should be to not overlook the enemies nearby her. So he couldn't pass by her side to get around to the other side of the practice field, which was a bit safer.

Not to mention that behind Nina, Claribel might be setting a trap with Karen Kei. Considering this, Nina walking this way to the practice field was effective.

In terms of guaranteeing his safety in this field, the time that Nina took to walk to the center of the practice field was the limit to the time that Layfon could concentrate on looking for Claribel.

If he couldn't find Claribel, Layfon would have to fight with Nina under worrisome conditions.

"Ahh, this really is....."

Layfon suddenly stopped his feet and sighed.

He thought of what had happened right when he had entered the school. From then till now, only a year and a bit more had passed. Though the Nina from that time was among the strongest of the Military Artists in Zuellni, in the end she had only been that level of a Military Artist.

In order to save Zuellni that faced a dead end, she endlessly struggled, but because her strength was not enough, she was angry, impatient.

The her like that had now become a strength that could surpass Layfon. Though she used the definitely abnormal means of the Haikizoku, this kind of thing wasn't important in the first place.

Rather, whether she could flexibly use the strength in her hands was the important point.

Moreover Nina could flexibly use that strength.

From that time till now, only one year and a bit had passed.

In that short of a time Layfon's power had been caught up to by Nina, and might be surpassed at any time.

"I can't stand it."

In Layfon's heart surfaced happy and discontented complicated feelings.

Nina had finally reached the center of the practice field.

Layfon hadn't been able to find Claribel. Had she never attempted to find Layfon who was hiding while using Sakkei in the first place, and rather stayed behind Nina's back working to set a trap the whole time?

".....Alright."

Layfon also made his decision.

He released the Sakkei that sealed his Kei in a breath.

The Kei pressure that was released blew strong winds with Layfon as the center.

The airflow and Nina's Kei pressure clashed with each other, and in a moment a cyclone was produced in the central area, spreading to the entire practice field.

Layfon restored his Shim Adamantium Dite, and holding the dark gray sword in front of him charged towards Nina.

"Haah!"

Nina raised her iron whips, taking a defensive position while standing in her position. Judging by her expression, she could see his movements.

This was a natural thing.

Though it was a natural thing, only a short while ago Nina hadn't been able to clearly see Layfon's movements.

"This really..... is!"

"Haah!"

Layfon drew close to Nina, sweeping the blade to release a slash , and this move was blocked. It was Kongoukei. Layfon released

external Kei from his body to deflect the shockwaves that were reflected back, and then they played out a dramatic moment with their weapons crossed.

In comparison to Layfon's single sword, both of Nina's hands held a weapon. Now that the difference in Kei strength had disappeared, it should be that their internal Kei difference in strength had also disappeared.

In other words, in this kind of state, Layfon would definitely lose a battle of brute force with Nina.

"Huaaah!"

"Che!"

Layfon's body was pushed back, and Kei began collecting in the iron whips. Because he was afraid of his weapons breaking, Layfon retreated backwards.

Not to mention, in the situation where he still hadn't discovered where Claribel was, Layfon couldn't waste all his time on Nina.

Nina gathered her focus to prepare to release a move, and Layfon, seeing this moment, put back his weapon. The sudden move made Nina lose her balance for a second, and though Layfon wanted to take advantage of the moment to follow up, Claribel still made him wary, so he truly retreated back. After putting distance between him and Nina, Layfon used dust to cover his figure, and once again used Sakkei.

He originally planned to move immediately, but staying in his position could also make the opponent mistake his position.

Nina stood her ground without moving. She seemed to have decided that she would wait for him to move first regardless.

"......How strange."

Layfon couldn't hold back his murmur. Nina was unexpectedly this leisurely.

Being this leisurely made him very uncertain.

Claribel hadn't moved.

What was Nina's reason for staying still?

On this battlefield, Layfon had only fought once with Nina, but Nina hadn't pursued him, making Layfon feel concerned. According to her personality, as soon as a fight began with her opponent, it was only right for her to continue fighting.

Since Nina hadn't done this, did that mean it was their battle plan to invite Layfon to fight at that position?

Claribel was currently setting a trap, he could be sure of that.

".....In this case, she's behind Captain."

But, if he went behind Nina to investigate, she would definitely take action.

"No, it should be fine as long as she acts, right?"

Since he hadn't been able to see his opponents' intent till now, continuing to guess their tactics was almost meaningless.

"Let's go then."

After making his decision, Layfon moved.

Of course, Layfon didn't recklessly charge at Nina. He connected the steel thread mode Sapphire Dite in his left hand to the handle of the Shim Adamantium Dite, and poured Kei into the Sapphire Dite that he had deliberately not poured Kei into before.

Layfon had used the burst of strong wind that had been produced earlier, so that not only his area, but Nina's area of the practice field also had steel threads. The steel threads almost filled the whole practice field.

At that time, he flowed Kei into the steel threads.

Layfon took note of the Dite's strength while pouring strong Kei more than what was necessary to operate the steel threads into them.

"Wah!"

From the other side of the dust came Nina's low shout.

She obviously would have this response.

Because the current situation was the same as Layfon's presence occupying the entire practice field in a moment. Just like Nina's giant Kei pressure obscuring Claribel's figure, Layfon's original position had also become ambiguous as a result of this action.

Layfon hadn't moved from his position. He maintained the Kei flow into the steel threads, calmly surveying the situation's developments.

What would Nina and Claribel think?

This time, the longer time was dragged out, the more use it would be to Layfon.

"Clara!"

Nina yelled out.

"Let's go, if this continues he'll be able to weave the formation!"

"Correct answer."

Layfon quietly murmured, responding to the Claribel's voice. The steel threads that were spread through the entire practice field confused Layfon's position by means of more than enough Kei flow while moving back and forth, preparing Lintence's Sougenkyouku technique. Due to the excessive Kei given to them, anyone could clearly feel their movements.

The movements of the steel threads were intimidating to the two of them.

Also, the steel threads substituted as sensory organs, receiving the conversation just now between the two of them, and discovering Claribel's position.

She was right behind Nina.

Had she been there from the start, or had she just moved there after their discussion on tactics had finished?

"They also plan on doing something."

Layfon also started running, running towards Nina and Claribel .

The trap had been set.

"Next up.....!"

Let's see which side's trap was more superior.

This training became a battle of that form.

After Layfon tore through the dust and passed through the smoke, Nina and Claribel were in front of him. Their thinking had been the same as Layfon's.

Thee two sides charged straight at each other, clashing together.

"Ohhhh!"

Nina's roar shook the battlefield. She had her two iron whips crossed in front of her chest, leaping high to charge at Layfon.

Without the least bit difference, Layfon rushed forth like a bullet.

"Hah!"

Layfon probed the space produced by the swings of the iron whips, weaving through the seams of the Kei pressure on the iron whips, and then rushed behind her.

Claribel was there. Her sword - Kochouenshiken - gave off light , dragging a crimson line by Layfon.

This strike was avoided by Layfon. He leaned low as if he wanted to graze the earth, and passed through behind both of them.

This was the place where Nina and Claribel had stayed till now, the center of the trap that Claribel had set.

"Come....."

Layfon was the one who said this, calling out to Claribel.

What kind of trap had she set?

What situation would arise?

And in this kind of situation what kind of action would Nina take?

Layfon had to witness all of it.

He had to show them that he could avoid all of it.

Had to show them that he could surpass all of it.

Why?

Why would they join hands to fight?

Why could they fight cooperatively?

In such a short time, Layfon seemed to be able to see the meaning and overture in it.

"......What will they do?"

This was a normal murmur. However, Layfon was confident that this sentence would provoke Claribel.

"Come on."

Just as Layfon expected, Claribel's eyes changed. Nina controlled her expression and made her decision.

After observing the change in the two's expression, Layfon also changed the flow of his Kei. He changed the flow of Kei into the steel threads into the most suitable amount, turning the extra Kei into internal Kei, increasing the limit of his movement abilities.

He would attack next, he would attack for them to see.

Layfon elevated his Kei flow, entering the condition of preparation for using Composite Blast. Since he had no way to weave a formation in an instant like Lintence, he could only use the part of Sougenkyouku that he had finished preparing.

Moreover, once the use of Layfon's newly created Kei technique - Composite Blast - was decided, it couldn't be changed.

If there was an error in his judgment, then it would create a very big loss, and perhaps would lead to the road to defeat.

Though this was only training.

However, depending on the result, this training might have a great effect on Layfon. Even if this was only training, that didn't mean it was okay to lose this competition.

What was important was whether Layfon could carry out his own determination.

"......They can coordinate their breathing with each other."

People from different platoons could do that kind of thing.

That meant Claribel knew what problem Nina was facing, and had become a comrade who would face the problem with her.

"In that case....."

His Kei thundered, the Kei pressure digging into the ground, whipping up dirt and sand. The steel threads released radiance, undulating up and down, finishing their formation.

Layfon raised the dark gray blade of the Shim Adamantium Dite, putting it on his shoulder, and taking a stance as if he wanted to hide it behind his back. Connected to its handle was the Sapphire Dite.

Nina moved.

Claribel headed over.

The two iron whips housing tremendous Kei attacked. Kei ran back and forth in her body, having still not erupted. Nina seemed to plan to close in to release some Kei technique.

Behind her, Claribel released a Kei technique hidden until now. Kei that had been embedded throughout erupted. In order to change to the move they had chosen, they produced Karen Kei, appearing before Layfon.

This was External-type Kei, Karen variant - Dawn's Radiance.

Explosions occurred in the practice field, and light overflowed from it. This light wouldn't dissipate in the air like a blip, but flew into the air from the ground, becoming a ball of light around as

large as a human head, then stopping like that in its position while emitting a strong radiance.

Countless numbers of these balls of light dyed the practice field white.

Claribel stopped her pace, leaving the side of Nina who was attacking. In order to initiate new changes, she showed a focused expression.

"This is....."

Layfon knew what moves would attack him.

This was Troyatte's expert skill. The name of the move would change according to his emotions at the time, so sometimes he called it 'Light Up', and sometimes called it 'Birushana'. It used lenses formed by changing the density of the air, using a special wavelength of light released from highly compressed Kei that could be seen as a beam of light.

She didn't use this power as well as Troyatte.

So the balls of light numbered this many. Moreover, this number also held another meaning.

This number was in order to give Layfon nowhere to run.

Killing intent surrounded Layfon's whole body. In order to escape from the beams of light that attacked from every direction, he could only move before they attacked.

However, Nina was in front of the only safe spot.

If he didn't move, Layfon would suffer their attacks, and then be squashed flat by the Kei of the two.

Did they want to expose him amidst the chaotic beams that couldn't be avoided, or perhaps even if he succeeded evading them, did they still have some powerful hidden strike?

If he were confused for a moment, he would instantly suffer two moves.

No..... no matter what action he took, there would be a further trap waiting for him.

"Therefore....."

Layfon had long since made up his mind, and had already decided his course of action. So, Layfon had spread the steel threads in all directions, weaving a formation, overlapped with Composite Blast.

Layfon..... didn't move.

Layfon had not raised his sword for a stance, and did not give off the air that he would take action.

Layfon saw the confused faces of two, and after sensing of the presences of Nina and Claribel rushing at him releasing Kei techniques, he released the strategy that he had laid himself.

External-type Kei variant - Sougenkyouku Nadare Kuzushi.

"Haaaaah!"

Combined Internal and External Kei variant - Raijin.

Nina also unleashed her Kei technique almost simultaneously. Her existence turned into something like radiance, seeming to become furiously billowing lightning. Strong noise and light flew by him continuing behind, and the powerful assault followed rushing towards him. A strong pressure as if it wanted to crush his entire body headed for Layfon.

Behind Nina, light burst open. Claribel's Dawn's Radiance released an uncountable number of beams of light. The high temperature of the beams undoubtedly attacked at the speed of light. The high temperature beam shouldn't have mass, but from every beam, Layfon's body would violently shake, perhaps due to the instantaneous rise in heat distorting the air. Layfon's back was hot and felt stabbing pain, and the smell of his scorched hair reached his nose.

However, Layfon's feet were there, and his arms were there.

His body was also there.

He stood there almost unwounded.

"Wha-!"

Nina's surprised face was very close. Behind her, Claribel also widened her eyes in amazement.

Layfon's surroundings had been covered with the light produced by Raijin and Dawn's Radiance, so vision was almost useless.

However, the two of them had seen what had just happened.

They were very clear on it.

Steel threads were spread all around Layfon. Seeing this scene, Nina and Claribel both showed a surprised expression.

Sougenkyouku Nadare Kuzushi. A dense cover of steel threads like a spiderweb protected him in all directions, and on the surface was a membrane of defensive Kei. The use of this move was to disperse the strength of all attacks.

Moreover, the energy of the attacks that this spiderweb of steel threads had just dispersed was sent to every corner of the practice field.

To Sharnid and the others who sat in the spectator seats watching the battle, at the same time as Nina and Claribel released their moves, the whole practice field seemed to explode.

"How..... can that....."

Had Nina and Claribel already exhausted their tactics? Though Nina had only used Raijin once, judging by the time when she had fought with Claribel, that last strike should have used all of her Kei .

Even if she hadn't used all of her stored Kei, the energy that had been dispersed by the steel threads would definitely have detonated any other Kei that had been lying in wait in the practice field.

"Next is."

Layfon still had the Kei that he had poured into the Shim Adamantium Dite. He had used Composite Blast and accumulated two Kei flows, and had retained two Kei techniques while not moving a muscle.

One move was Nadare Kuzushi.

There was still another move.

"If you can get through this move, you will be the winners."

Small fragments entered the range of his vision, pieces of the Sapphire Dite that had broken off from Composite Blast. Layfon murmured this, and then released the other strike.

Heaven's Blade Art - Silent Flash.

Taking up a stance, he swept downwards in a blitz.

With a sound like explosions engulfing the air, the blade calmly released Kei.

The Kei released from the blade traveled with an abnormally slow speed.

"Wha.....?"

Nina who had taken up a defensive stance unconsciously let out a confused sound, and this was definitely her first time seeing Kei flow this slowly.

In the battles of Military Artists where speed was extremely important, this kind of slow move couldn't appear.

"Run!"

Claribel yelled.

Nina, who was hesitating over whether she should engage it, immediately retreated back after hearing the yell.

However, she couldn't escape from this move.

"It's useless."

Layfon murmured. The Shim Adamantium Dite in his hand began breaking. However, though the Dite was broken, that didn't mean the move would disappear. The move which had already been released would continue to run following its determined path .

The slowest Kei technique pursued the continuously retreating Nina.

After seeing this scene, Layfon restored his last Dite..... the Adamantium Dite.

"What is this!"

Nina shouted out, crying out in uncertainty.

Nina wasn't only retreating in a straight line. Because the aftermath of her move had destroyed the ground, the practice field had turned to a desert. In order to not stumble on the practice field , she paid attention to her steps while fleeing back and forth.

The Kei that Layfon had released chased her from behind.

"The speed of this move is slow because the density of its Kei is incredibly high. And then it can be induced to move by Karen Kei! "

"I see!"

Nina seemed to realize something.

Layfon thought of it. The platoon captain competition before the Military Arts Competition began. When Nina and Gorneo had fought, she had experienced a similar move. [5]

"Some thread-like things....."

If Nina looked for the threads of Karen Kei stuck to her body, she would find them immediately.

This was a Kei technique specialized for fighting aged phases, and not a move for facing Military Artists. Hazy Garret, which was also a Heaven's Blade Art, was a technique that used Kei to carry

out external destruction in concert, and Silent Flash was a skill specialized at destroying the outer shell. Because the extremely heavy blow could be directed by the snakelike threads, the destructive move could indeed reach its target.

However, its speed was quite slow, so it wasn't suited to be used in a fight of Military Artists.

In reality, Claribel had already seen the winding threads, and cut them off. After losing its target, Silent Flash slowly hurtled towards the ground of the practice field.

"It isn't..... over!"

Layfon waved the large blade of the Adamantium Dite, casting the additional power of Composite Blast. As expected, Composite Blast for Silent Flash was very heavy, so Layfon used the blade to send it out.

After Composite Blast and Silent Flash moving in the air met, the power of the Kei techniques added together. Since the threads had been cut and the Kei technique had lost its propulsion, the weight had begun to fall.

With the added Kei from the Composite Blast just now, Silent Flash didn't wait to fall down before beginning to explode.

"Wha-!"

"Uwah!"

The sound of the explosion covered the shouts of the two.

"Then, what will happen?"

Considering the strength of Kei necessary to use a Heaven's Blade Art, even a simple explosion would have extremely strong force.

But, the force of the explosion didn't focus on the two people. The rushing power didn't have a target and spread in all directions , and the actual wounds inflicted to them weren't any. Because of this, Layfon had deliberately waited for an opening where they couldn't defend in time, however.....

The explosion subsided, and the dust that danced in the sky gradually thinned.

The original landscape couldn't be seen from a single inch of the practice field.

"The two of them....."

An explosion of this scale had happened, and Layfon had lost their presences.

However, if only they took action, Layfon wouldn't miss their presences.

"......Go!"

Now.

On the right.

The great blade of the Adamantium Dite wouldn't be in time to defend, so Layfon ducked his body.

A crimson cut path flew over his head.

It was Claribel.

Layfon didn't counterattack Claribel who flew over him like that. Rather, he confirmed her position, while searching for the other presence.

When he still hadn't found the other presence, a strong Kei pressure pushed open the dust.

"......She used Kongoukei in time, huh."

Layfon thought he had saw an opportunity where Nina wouldn't be able to use Kongoukei in time, but her defensive reaction was faster than Layfon knew. Claribel's action was this fast, because she had used Nina as a shield, therefore saving her Kei.

"......Haha."

Layfon unconsciously laughed.

This meant he had lost.

These words naturally emerged in his mind.

He had used Composite Blast, even sacrificing two Dites for the sake of setting up his technique, but it had been beautifully blocked by the two of them. Layfon knew that his final attack was a bit naive. However, this was Layfon's power at the current stage.

Nina had become strong to this level, and even coordinated with Claribel to use attacks that they had not planned in advance.

The one who joined hands with her was Claribel from a different platoon. When had they found time to train in secret?

That kind of practical effort that didn't meet the eye let the power of the two almost override Layfon's.

But.....

"I still have a weapon."

The Adamantium Dite was still in Layfon's hand.

"I still have a body that can move."

Layfon was almost unharmed. Since his strategy to win had fallen, he should admit defeat and retreat from the battle. Layfon understood this way would be a bit smarter, but the current him didn't want to make that kind of choice.

"Even so, I can still fight."

It wasn't like he could only choose smart ways of doing things. The two of them who faced him now definitely would have nothing to gain by making such a choice.

"Let's fight seriously."

Layfon decided.

Claribel once again covered her presence, Nina condensed her Kei, and closed in on him.

Layfon raised the blade of the Adamantium Dite.

Regardless of how the situation developed, he would fight on.

He had this resolve.

Everyone held their breath watching the battle.

She only just realized that the time had flown by.

The workers who had come over to tell them that they had surpassed the time allotted for the practice field were left speechless by seeing the scene. The other people on the spectator seats all had classes to attend, or had other things to do, but no one stood up from their seats.

Meishen was the same.

Receiving Layfon's request, Meishen had made the food from dinner into bentos, and then brought them here, but in the end she stood there staring.

Layfon was fighting on the practice field. He fought against Nina and Claribel, staging an incredibly intense battle.

Though Meishen who was a normal person had no way to understand the battles of Military Artists, she had never been absent from the matches of the seventeenth platoon.

So, she still understood a bit.

Nina had become strong. Though she had joined hands with Claribel, the two of them could still suppress Layfon whom she felt had overwhelming strength. It could even be said that Layfon was barely maintaining himself on the battlefield.

Seeing this scene made Meishen's beliefs begin to collapse.

Layfon was very strong. Meishen had once thought that in this Academy City there definitely wasn't anyone who could win against his strength.

This way of thinking wasn't at all related with the truth, and she understood that this was only a girl's fantasy.

In the commotion during the school's opening ceremony, Layfon had handsomely rescued Meishen. His figure at the time had produced a kind of fantasy in Meishen that could be called excessive. Even if Layfon had received serious wounds in some battle that he couldn't tell others about, Meishen's fantasy had never once crumbled.

However, this kind of thinking began to crumble.

Nina who had originally only been chasing after Layfon's back was now staging a close-combat intense war. This scene wrecked the fantasy in Meishen's heart.

".....Layton."

Meishen who was in the spectator seats couldn't know what kind of expression Layfon had on his face. The three appeared and

disappeared between the gaps in the dust, and would suddenly appear somewhere else, and simply keeping track of them was already difficult.

However, even still, even if she almost couldn't see the battle, Meishen still understood, she still understood this.

Meishen's fantasy had already crumbled by now.

"Is Senpai okay?"

"Nn, nn."

Meishen was a bit unstable, and Vati who had helped her bring the bentos over reached out her hand to steady her. Meishen wasn't even in a state of mind to say thanks.

The situation continued changing.

"......Even if it's like this, is anything wrong?"

She unconsciously murmured.

Even she was quickly becoming different from before. Her who had only hidden behind her childhood friends' backs, now lived alone and had her own store.

The surrounding people would also change. Even if the gap in strength between Layfon and Nina changed, even if this astonished people, it still shouldn't daze her.

"No, It's not like that."

What Meishen couldn't permit wasn't the change itself.

She couldn't permit the factor contained inside the change.

"......I can't.....permit it?"

The thought that appeared in her head again produced the feeling as if Meishen's brain was being mauled. She couldn't permit it. What arrogant language. His changes made her feel unhappy, so she couldn't permit them? It was really too much.....

However.

"What can't I permit?"

Meishen didn't understand it.

No, she understood clearly.

Meishen didn't understand the details, didn't understand the hateful part of herself.

However, Meishen understood the feelings she had towards it, and knew how she looked upon it.

He had grown ever farther from herself.

He was going somewhere far away. The feeling from last time grew ever closer to the truth, gradually becoming true.

Because she had this way of thinking, vocabulary such as 'I can't permit it' had appeared in Meishen's mind.

"But in the end, it still is....."

A kind of arrogance. Even if Layfon had really left, Meishen had no right to stop him.

But, before that happened.....

She should still have time. Meishen had once thought this way. She still had five years before graduating from Zuellni.

She only had to take it step by step, correctly moving forward. Meishen had once thought this way. She had once believed that leaving the shelter of her childhood friends and slowly trying to express her feelings was enough.

"It's too late."

Perhaps the situation was like that. Meishen didn't know Layfon's feelings of moving away, not knowing what kind of situation he was in, but if Layfon really wanted to leave the Academy City as she thought, then the speed at which Meishen was changing couldn't catch up to Layfon.

Maybe before she could express her feelings, Layfon would no longer be here.

Moreover, this kind of change brought something like discomfort alongside the battle, seeming to imply that in terms of

Layfon and the others, a place like the Academy City was already too narrow.

So, the feeling that Layfon was leaving had emerged in her.

In the end, the battle continued for several hours after this, and as everyone was waiting for the battle to end, the sky was already tinted with a touch of red.

"Sorry, and I even asked you to bring the bentos here."

"No, it's okay."

Layfon, his whole body weak, apologized while collapsed in the resting room, and Meishen couldn't say anything other than this response.

Layfon's face was darkened from sweat and mud, and even his battle clothing had become tattered.

Until today, Meishen had never visited the resting room after a battle.

"Even if it were me..... I couldn't eat all of this instantly."

"Nn, it's okay."

Layfon's back rested against a cabinet as he sat on the ground without moving a muscle. He bent over, sitting there cumbersomely without any strength in his body. Until today, Meishen had never seen him like this.

The current him was this tired.

"......How was it?"

"Nn?"

"This..... competition."

"Aah..... nn."

The expression that emerged on Layfon from his understanding of the words' meanings surprised Meishen.

The completely satisfied expression that showed on his mud-covered and extremely tired face produced a feeling in Meishen as if she had been pushed aside.

"Thought I lost, I probably did my best."

This couldn't continue.

"......But, until this, Layton has been somewhat....."

"Yeah, but those kinds of things will happen."

"What do you mean, those kinds of things.....?"

"......Things that won't happen to normal people. Though, if such a thing happened to a normal person, doesn't that just mean he isn't normal?"

"......Layton?"

As expected, Layfon was very tired. She thought so in her heart.

His heart and body were both very tired. He hadn't seen something that obviously concerned him. Or perhaps he had seen that he didn't have a reason at all to see the other side.

But, this had encouraged a change in Layfon.

"Though I hadn't thought like this before, I feel that I was probably too conceited before. It's too humiliating to have used calm and objective principles to voice an extremely arrogant opinion."

"That never happened! Layton is.....!"

".....M-Mei?"

Meishen unintentionally raised her voice, and Layfon's eyes widened.

"Layton..... is very strong, truly very strong. Because Layton saved my life."

"That....."

"Even if it doesn't mean much to Layton, to me it's....."

Meishen interrupted Layfon's words. That wasn't anything amazing. Meishen knew he would say something like that. But, even if it didn't mean much, to Meishen it had already become an extremely important, precious memory that couldn't be lost.

It had already become something like that.

"So..... to me, Layton is..... Layton is....."

"Mei.....?"

What was she planning to say? Meishen noticed that she had brought forth a disastrous development, so she felt very confused.

But, this was already impossible to stop, right?

The change and growth of Meishen's heart perhaps couldn't catch up to the change that Layfon was preparing to welcome.

Words spoken according to common sense.

Therefore, right now, even if she was reluctant.....

Even if her heart would hurt, even if she would suffer pains, even if she couldn't express it well, she still had to open her heart right now, and let Layfon see her true feelings.

If she didn't do so, perhaps she wouldn't ever be able to deeply express the feelings in her heart again.

"I..... to Layton..... to Layton....."

So, she could only open the doors to her heart.

These feelings were very, very important, precious like treasure.

She only wanted to hide them in a treasure chest, not letting anyone else see them, these feelings that only belonged to herself.

However, treasure that couldn't be taken out to be seen was the same as no treasure at all. If the treasure chest couldn't be opened and no one could know what was inside, was it a real treasure at all?

However, if the key couldn't be seen, then.....?

Losing the key to her heart.

If that figure disappeared, if Layfon disappeared from before here, could the treasure chest continue to hold treasure?

Thinking this, Meishen had no choice.....

"I think Layton..... Layfon....."

"Mei.....?"

"I like Layfon."

So, she had to open the treasure chest.

From the treasure chest, she released her most important, most cherished treasure.

Chapter 2 - Nina's Battlefield

Her body was heavy like it had been filled with lead.

"Ugh, ah-"

Her joints uttered laments as if they had become stone.

"This battlefield really is exhausting."

"Yeah, my Kei vein was almost fatigued."

"Nn."

This was the resting room of the practice battlefield.

The intense and lengthy battle had already finished, so Nina and Claribel were there.

"Ah, But! Did you see? Did you see it, Nina?"

"Nnn."

"That is Layfon Alseif! Puwah!"

"......I felt it deeply."

Claribel stood up excitedly, and immediately cried out painfully because of muscle pain. Her like this made Nina show a wry smile.

"Felt it deeply, huh."

Since Layfon had joined the seventeenth platoon, a year and then some had already passed. Nina had trained with him, and had carried out practice battles, but this was the first time she had seriously battled with Layfon.

"It's totally different from the feeling of watching from afar."

"This is Layfon who is dedicated to fighting filth monsters. How do you feel fighting against him when he can use steel threads?"

"He's very strong....."

Nina could only reply like that.

Using his blade and steel threads simultaneously on the battlefield, and each setting traps, Layfon had lost two Dites. But afterwards he had still used the great blade of the Adamantium Dite to fight, and that fighting method could only be described as ingenious.

Moreover he still had an unmatched oppressive feeling.

"It felt as if fighting against a ridiculously strong filth monster."

"Right!"

Claribel was very happy.

"Though only swordfighting is Layfon's specialty, there are many styles to mix that with steel threads, perhaps that way of fighting should be called rather scary? Of course Layfon's steel thread technique isn't as good as Lintence-sama, but even still it's

already very strong. The problem really isn't the depth of the techniques, but the momentary explosive strength of using the techniques. After all Layfon has the unique ability where he only needs to see other peoples' Kei techniques to be able to steal them, so his style of fighting has become completely specialized around using these peculiar methods. Of course it's like that, after all he's the only Heaven's Blade successor in history to not use a good weapon like the Heaven's Blade....."

Showing an intoxicated expression because of her happy feelings, Claribel chattered endlessly. She spoke while sitting back down, and then lying flat on the ground again. Even so, she still continually talked, and later her voice eventually quieted down.

"Clara, if you want to sleep just go back to the room to sleep. I don't have the strength today to carry you back home."

"I know~ but never mind that, Layfon's more important. Did you see? Before when he fought me he used Hazy Garret, but this time it was Silent Flash. They're the super powerful Heaven's Blade Arts. Do you understand? Why they're Heaven's Blade Arts? That they're Layfon's own moves, and Layfon himself believes that without using the Heaven's Blade he couldn't have invented those techniques, so they're called Heaven's Blade Arts? Though Layfon's Dite has been improved with the techniques of this city, that Layfon can unexpectedly use these kinds of techniques with normal weapons, how deserving of Layfon. He really won't be buried in the wilderness like that!"

"Oh."

Layfon was very strong.

Nina held the Haikizoku in her body, and had received Dites from Zuellni that could completely bear the great power that the Haikizoku exerted, and Claribel could use the many-faceted Karen Kei. Even facing the two of them, Layfon still almost hadn't fallen.

Nina knew Layfon was very strong. From their first inter-platoon match, she had understood this.

And today, she had won against him.

"Nn, he truly is very strong."

This fact made Nina so happy she could almost collapse, but also made a lonely feeling emerge in her. Though it wasn't her by herself who had defeated Layfon, to today Nina had endlessly honed herself with him as her target.

She had once thought Layfon stood at a distant place that she would never be able to arrive at.

Reaching that place made Nina have a sort of guilty feeling, feeling that it was only because of the Haikizoku's help that she had made it. Claribel had said there was no reason to care about that kind of thing, and the Haikizoku had said something similar. It didn't matter what sort of strength, not being able to flexibly use it meant it was meaningless.

The two of them had joined hands to defeat Layfon. So, Nina didn't have the joy of reaching her goal by herself. However, she

didn't think that it was wrong to cooperate with others to complete a goal if she couldn't do it with her own strength. Else, she wouldn't have formed the seventeenth platoon in the first place. Otherwise she should have felt that it didn't matter who the platoon members were as long as she became strong herself.

"I guess....."

The seventeenth platoon.

Claribel had fallen asleep unwittingly.

"Clara, I'm tired too, there's no way I can carry you back."

"I know thaat-"

Even the sound of her reply had become slurred, becoming the breathing sound of slumber.

Nina herself was tired to the point where she was too lazy to stand up, but thinking that they needed sheets for two people, Nina dragged her heavy body up.

"The seventeenth platoon."

Nina hadn't showered, and walked through the corridor with mud all over her body. She planned to somehow shower before sleeping, but she wasn't even certain that she could do this kind of small thing.

"It's my platoon, but....."

She and Claribel had joined hands to challenge Layfon.

Challenging him wasn't wrong, and joining hands with Claribel wasn't wrong either.

However, the true meaning and significance of this activity couldn't be told to anyone.

"Am I betraying them?"

She muttered this.

Even if this was unavoidable it was still the same. This fact not only deeply engraved itself in Nina's body, but would also brand itself in the hearts of the people around her, like the words Layfon had said during the battle in the empty city. People would get some kind of message from being engraved into reality, and that would make them think.

Her pace as she walked in the hallway was quite heavy.

Was it because she was exhausted, or because she had noticed this truth?

"......Perhaps it's already too late."

Even her muttering was heavy.

Could she bear this kind of weight?

This doubt gradually destroyed the joy of victory.

Sharnid was thinking.

".....What has happened?"

"Hm? Ahah....."

Perhaps nothing had happened, as Dalshena who walked beside him sent a surprised look.

"Uh, do you have no thoughts about what happened just now?"

The two were leaving the practice battlefield, walking on the road back home. Sharnid had tried inviting Dalshena to dinner, but like normal he had been refused. Before they split, the two didn't have anything in particular to say, and had just walked, and this conversation had occurred in the middle of the road.

If things were normal, the scene that should have happened was Sharnid would use his normal manner to chat with Dalshena, and then she would respond coldly, but today's Sharnid was genuinely quiet, so Dalshena cared about his response.

"Just now.....? Do you mean Nina's strong power? Or Nina teaming up with Claribel?"

"What, you obviously know, right?"

"Huh, are you jealous?"

"How should I say it?"

Sharnid had long since known that Nina possessed a strong power. When coming in contact with Grendan, and when a big group of filth monsters had attacked Grendan, Nina had shown abnormally strong power in those rough battles.

Moreover, she had candidly spoken of her association with the abnormal world.

Nina was afraid that she would drag others into the battlefield, but in the end this hadn't happened, and Sharnid's life was as calm as usual. Of course, that was other than the personal affair that had happened around the time of the school opening ceremony.

That event was also related to Dalshena. Although her expression was currently very calm, was she actually like that?

(Ya, let's ignore that for now.)

Sharnid pulled his stray thoughts back in place, and voice his sincere opinion:

"It seems like our Captain-sama really likes keeping secrets."

"You think she's concealing something?"

"Anyway, it's something bothersome."

"If she only had today's competition because of that, what would you do?"

"What should I do, huh....."

He had relayed Nina's words to Dalshena.

Though he had relayed it for her to hear, still.....

"Up to today, I still haven't been completely confident."

"Yeah, true."

Dalshena's dubious attitude wasn't strange.

"We indeed saw a creature that was big enough to cover all of Grendan....."

"We can interpret it as a special filth monster beyond the ordinary."

"Then what was the reason for Zuellni and Grendan to come in contact? Grendan isn't a city near Zuellni, right? I've heard that the areas surrounding Grendan all have unusually high probabilities of filth monsters appearing, so Zuellni couldn't have taken the initiative to come close to it."

"Really? Back when the city went out of control, didn't Zuellni charge into a big group of filth monsters? Perhaps Zuellni's Electronic Fairy experienced abnormalities?"

"......I see."

Even Sharnid didn't know if this way of thinking was really Dalshena's true thoughts.

However, it wasn't impossible. It was a fact that Zuellni had experienced abnormalities and charged into a big group of filth monsters, and it could be extended to be interpreted as the reason for coming in contact with Grendan.

Perhaps that group of aliens and that giant creature were only things that already lived in this world, special abnormal beings different from the normal filth monsters. Maybe there was no hidden meaning in this.

Sharnid thought that the secrets that Nina was facing and pulled even deeper with her body stuck in the mud perhaps never existed in the first place.

Perhaps it was only Sharnid thinking too much.

"Nina teamed up with Claribel who came from Grendan, and then secretly did things while excluding us, fearing to say anything even to Layfon..... the situation wouldn't be like that, right?"

"If you want to know, couldn't you just open your mouth and ask?"

"You wouldn't care about that?"

"Well, I wouldn't bet my life for that person. I won't bother to care about things other people won't talk."

"Ah, so that's how you think."

After all, the reason she had joined the seventeenth platoon was also because that kind of thing had happened. The tenth platoon that Sharnid had once been a part of had already collapsed, and Dinn who had been the platoon captain had been taken back to his home.

"To me, the so-called platoon is only to keep my power from getting rusty, and a place where I can efficiently improve my strength. I don't have any need for something like a platoon captain."

"......So that's how it is."

As Dalshena said this, Sharnid tried not to look at her face.

Life in the Academy City was only six years.

"We already spent five years, huh."

Perhaps it was up to the newer people to begin putting in effort toward something now. Sharnid and the others already didn't have enough time to do such things. Life in the Academy City ended after six years, and the students didn't possess unlimited time, so the ending time was bound to approach.

Feeling that this sort of time was close by would make people lose their reckless momentum. Sharnid didn't think he could find a goal that could make him hot-bloodedly think 'I still have a year'.

"Correct."

Dalshena nodded her head indicating agreement. Sharnid couldn't hold great expectations of her who faced the same.

"But, that's my problem, and isn't a problem of yours."

"......Nn."

"Did you leave us in order to run into difficulty in this kind of place?" [6]

"....."

When Sharnid still hadn't thought of how he should reply, the road had already split into two. Dalshena didn't say goodbye, didn't continue questioning, and didn't request that Sharnid answer, simply quietly walking on the road. Sharnid who had stopped his steps could only stand there gazing at her gradually departing figure.

He scratched his head.

He looked at the sky.

"I really can't stand it."

Sharnid put forth a great effort in order to mutter that sentence.

His body was heavy after finishing a large number of chores.

"Really....."

Gorneo let that word out of his mouth. He was at the hospital. It was currently evening, and visiting hours were already almost over. His face wrinkled as he tried to solidify the feeling of his shoulder and neck as he moved forward to the place he wanted to go.

His target was the big floor for hospitalized patients.

"Shante, I'm coming in."

After knocking on the door he quickly walked into the room.

This was a single room, but there were already guests inside.

A person who shouldn't have appeared here.

"Ah, it's been hard on you~"

".....Why are you here?"

The person who had come to visit before him was Samiraya. The Student Council President who should have been working in the Student Council building had unexpectedly and for some unknown reason come here.

Many things had occurred during the Student Council elections, and Samiraya had met Shante. After that, whenever she found time, she would come to visit Shante like this.

That would obviously make one happy, but.....

But today.....

"Huh? Because I finished my work, right?"

"Did you finish looking at the repair costs for the practice battlefield?"

"Huh? That case can't be filed today, right?"

Samiraya came to that conclusion with her eyes open wide in a surprised expression, making Gorneo unable to keep from rubbing his temples. The competition that had been held today had been carried out with the consent of both the Student Council President and the Military Arts Head, and because it was a debt of gratitude for the special task from before, even though it was a request for personal use from a platoon, the repair costs had not been apportioned to the platoon.

Had it been normal, there would have been no reason to rush the handling of it, but.....

The damage this time was truly too tragic.

The degree of destruction that Gorneo had originally expected was probably about the same as the time when Layfon and Claribel had fought, but the competition this time had also involved Nina, and Nina's power was far beyond what Gorneo had known, so the destruction of the practice battlefield was far greater than he had expected.

Only because of this had Samiraya thought that the damage assessment wouldn't be completed so quickly.

"Hasn't the assessment already been sent to me to sign?"

".....Huh?"

After Gorneo replied, Samiraya's face turned blue in an instant.

"The people supervising the practice field very much enjoy watching Military Arts competitions, this is very well-known among the platoons. Those guys all will watch the battle while calculating the probable damage, drawing up a plan for repairs."

"Really?"

"Though the damage this time is very great and we have to spend some time carrying out confirmations, the assessment has reached my desk."

"Uh, ah...ah...ah...ah....."

Samiraya listened to Gorneo's explanation while making a strange noise. In Gorneo's mind emerged an image of the Student Council vice-president Leu in the Student Council room quietly becoming angry.

The same scene emerged in Samiraya's mind.

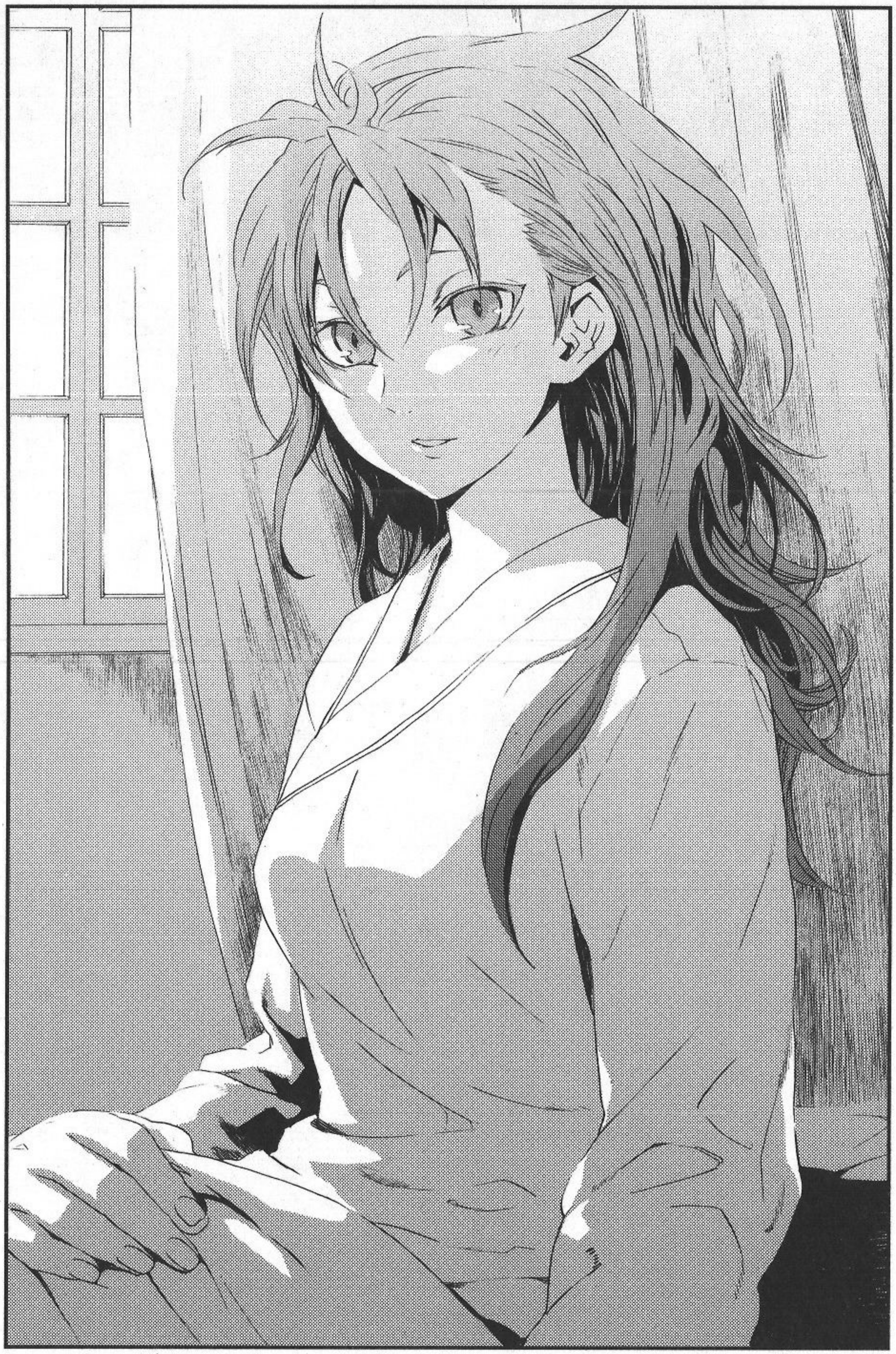
"I.....I.....I'll be going!"

Right after saying that, she hurriedly rushed out of the hospital room.

"Don't run in the hospital!"

After reminding her, Gorneo let out a sight, and then looked at the bed.

On the bed, there was a girl looking at him while smiling calmly .



She was Shante.

Though the past her had been in the same year as Gorneo, her body had been small enough to sit on his shoulder. But, since the event that happened in Grendan, up through today her body had continuously grown at an alarming rate.

This phenomenon didn't seem to be the same as the burst of fast growth that Gorneo had seen several times before.

Shante hadn't returned to her original body size, and she seemed to have put all her past years of growth to be completed in a short moment.

When the doctor had said this, Gorneo had thought of when Layfon had seen Shante's transformation before and had given Alsheyra as an example, so he had told the doctor that it could have been Shante's strong Kei flow that stopped her from growing.

However, this reason couldn't explain the Shante transforming from an older person to a child.

In short, Shante's growth still didn't show any signs of stopping. With this kind of rapid growth, it was possible that ordinary daily nutrition wasn't enough to supply her body with nutrients, so she still continued to stay in the hospital.

"Are you doing alright?"

"Nn, it's too bad these things are attached to my body, so I can't run around."

Saying this, Shante raised the tube that stuck out from her arm. Her appearance had once again become a bit different from yesterday, making Gorneo feel uneasy.

"You don't have to come every day, you know."

"I can't do that."

"Why?"

Shante tilted her head giving a puzzled look. Facing her like this , Gorneo still felt uneasy as could be expected. Spread out in front of her were sweets that Samiraya had brought as gifts, and some were still left.

The Shante that Gorneo knew wouldn't speak like this.

The Shante that Gorneo knew would gobble the food in front of her in an instant.

"......In another week, I might not be able to recognize you."

"Don't worry, Goru will definitely be able to recognize me."

"Mm."

Shante showed a slight smile, and Gorneo unconsciously turned his head.

"Moreover, even if Goru doesn't recognize me, I'll definitely understand, so don't worry."

"Mm."

Ahh, how worried his heart was.

The current Shante was completely different from the wild-natured yet grown-up her that Gorneo had seen many times. Along with her body growing, Shante's heart grew as well. This situation made Gorneo feel worried.

He couldn't tell if he would unwittingly become a relatively younger person, and that kind of feeling made Gorneo uncomfortable.

"Ahh, this really is....."

When Shante was unconscious he had been distraught all day, but he wouldn't have thought that when she awoke he would still be distraught all day.

She who became more beautiful every day made Gorneo feel restless.

Two people woke up at the same strange time.

"Nn-"

"What is it?"

The resting room was dark. Had the manager of the practice battlefield not seen Nina and Claribel, or had she noticed, but been helpless towards their deep sleep, therefore leaving them here?

Whatever the answer, Nina and Claribel had been left in the resting room of the practice field.

"......In the end I want to take a shower."

"I hope we can use it."

Though her stomach was very hungry, the smell of sweat that came from her body and the feeling of the mud that stuck to her body were even more unbearable.

Claribel also agreed with Nina's judgment, so the two of them walked to the shower room. Though there were no lights on inside , warm water still flowed from the showerhead. Relying on the emergency lights from the corridor that they had walked through, the two of them showered, washing off the sweat and dirt on their body.

"Now, what should we do?"

After washing off their sweat and calming that dirty feeling, it became a strong hunger as if they were fasting.

"......Speaking of that, the door should already be locked, right?"

"Isn't there still a security guard?"

"Is..... there?"

".....It seems like I can't hear the sound of anyone."

Perhaps there were people here. But, the practice battlefield where Military Artists battled was quite vast, and this big building was surrounded by empty buildings, so it was unknown whether a security guard was nearby.

"Maybe we can use the vending machine that the spectators use ?"

"If we use brute force to get out of here, the aftermath will be very troublesome."

The vending machine was unplugged. After obtaining food and beverages, the two of them once again returned to the resting room , and then gobbled up the pasta, sandwiches, fried foods, and other food that they had bought in great quantity.

Though they were female, if there were two ravenous Military Artist stomachs that wanted to eat a meal, such a description would be very appropriate for the situation.

The speechless yet noisy eating scene continued for quite a while.

"Hu, I'm full. At this kind of time, the amount of food really is more important than the quality."

Claribel who was sitting on the floor let out a satisfied sigh, a small mountain of garbage piled up by her waist.

"Not bad at all."

Nina also sighed. The satisfied feeling of the fatigue that had been firmly attached to her body finally disappearing spread through her body.

"......Then, what should we do next?"

"We can only wait here for the doors to be opened."

"Ah, the situation really has turned into that."

"We can also go to the security guard room, but....."

"Yeah, it would feel embarrassing."

Therefore, the best method would be to go back to sleep. After the two of them collected the garbage, they once again laid down.

"......Oh right, Nina."

"What?"

"Do you have anyone you like?"

"Eh?"

The question that Claribel suddenly put out made Nina prop her body up in a half-sitting position.

"W.....What kind of things are you saying so suddenly?"

"Haah, isn't it like one of those chats about love topics? Speaking of which, I've never had such a thing with Nina."

"Obviously, that kind of topic....."

"You don't like it?"

"It..... It isn't something that can be said trivially."

A strange light flashed in Claribel's eyes, and Nina turned her head as if to dodge that gaze.

However, that movement wouldn't stop her from continuing that topic.

"Really? I feel that we should exchange information when we chat about that kind of topic."

"That kind of thing....."

"What do you think about Layfon?"

".....Don't you like him?"

"That's right, but I feel like Nina also feels that way!"

"That..... That's not how it is!"

"Is that true?"

"Right."

"Oho. Then is it okay if Layfon and I do this and that?"

"Underage people can't do that kind of thing."

"You don't have any jealousy mixed in that stubbornness, right?
"

"Didn't I say....."

Just as the words left her mouth, Nina couldn't continue speaking. The expression that appeared on Claribel's face was that serious, and her gaze didn't seem like she was joking either.

"Nina."

"W.....What?"

"There's the possibility that we might die tomorrow. If that kind of thing makes you hesitate, that moment could possibly mean the end of the world."

"Ah, nn....."

"I don't mean that you should abandon yourself to despair or live for pleasure, but I feel that you should honestly face yourself in a way that won't make yourself regret."

"I.....I'm doing that."

"Then, what do you really think about Layfon.....?"

"That..... that....."

"Ah, I don't know myself what the situation will become, but personally, I hope to peacefully resolve this problem."

"By problem, you mean....."

"Competing with a good friend over the same guy, isn't that kind of feeling good?"

".....It's a bit strange to be called that by Clara."

"Is it that strange?"

".....That, I don't really understand."

What was definitely true was that this feeling wasn't bad.

However, as to her feelings towards Layfon.....

"I truly don't really understand."

As a Military Artist, Nina greatly respected him. As a companion in the same platoon, Nina thought that there wasn't anyone more trustworthy.

Then, as a woman.....?

Nina thought of what had happened in the empty city, thinking of when Layfon had applied medicine on her back to treat her. The tense feeling she had felt at the time could be explained as a manifestation of her feelings.

Therefore, that would mean this kind of feeling had already taken form in her heart, but the situation wasn't like that.

She didn't like Layfon. That assertion made Nina feel a bit of resistance, but she felt that she could never think of Layfon as a lover.

".....You're still indecisive, huh."

"Wu!"

As Claribel said this, Nina suddenly became speechless.

"I should say that Nina's mental age towards such things like love is super low, maybe the same as Layfon, or maybe you're even slower than him."

"Ah, uh, ah....."

Nina wanted to deny this, but she also understood that she didn't have anything that she could refute that with, so she couldn't say anything meaningful.

"Therefore, let's do this. Though I feel sorry for you, if I have to wait for your mental age to grow into an adult's, the time that would be wasted would be a pity."

"No, but..... other people think Layfon....."

"That's true. But the other people all understand their own feelings, and I think they're eligible to be my rivals, so I shouldn't have any real reason to care about them, right?"

"Uh, um..... yeah, I guess."

"Love is a battle. Once you become careless, the things that you want with all your heart will disappear in an instant to a place you can't touch."

"Wu, nn....."

"Aah, therefore, starting from tomorrow..... hehe, hehehehe....."

"Um, hey.....?"

"Although it was the two of us, we still won after all. Though I only thought so in my heart, things that have been decided are things that have been decided. Hehe, hahaha..... hahahahahahahahahahahahaha."

Speaking of this, Claribel had said once before that if she won against Layfon she would confess to him.

Nina felt somewhat uncomfortable looking at Claribel's gradually collapsing expression in the darkness, while once again thinking.

(Really, I still don't understand.)

But, her chest indeed felt tight.

But it was because she wanted to resist that kind of action that would change her environment, though on the other hand, she would change as well.

Other than Military Arts, Layfon's usual personality and disposition that couldn't really be relied on, could change at the hands of a woman.

(Change annoys me after all.)

Nina didn't want the environment surrounding her to change.

"That's a desire that can't be realized."

This was the Academy City. The reason everyone came here was because they wanted to change themselves. If they didn't change themselves, then they had no reason to brave dangers to come to the Academy City. To this Academy City, change was an obvious phenomenon.

"That desire can't be realized."

"......What?"

"......It's nothing."

It was useless to keep embracing an impossible desire.

"......This is what I think."

"What?"

"I think Nina has some narcissistic tendencies."

"Wha-!"

"Doesn't Nina think that she's a sorrowful being and stuck in the middle of things?"

"That....."

"It's okay, if it can let you exert your full power."

"No, as I said....."

"What, isn't that quite good? The darkness in your heart has times when it can come in handy. What I'm saying is that those reasons are evil."

"I.....I'm not that kind of person!"

".....Forget about that, don't you feel that the air in here has become strange?"

The fantastic allegations made Nina's heart become chaotic, and compared to her, Claribel's expression was quite calm.

"Stop talking about that..... What?"

Claribel's face wasn't the same, since a smile hadn't emerged nor was she showing a relaxed expression.

This was her face on the battlefield.

".....What is it?"

However, her body naturally entered battle condition. Nina instantly stood up from her lying down position, searching for an unusual presence.

The air wasn't the same?

".....What's the meaning of this?"

Changes had indeed appeared in the air. However, Nina didn't know what exactly was different.

"I remember this kind of subtle change in the air. In Grendan, this would happen whenever those guys appeared."

"Wolf Faces.....?"

"But those guys have already....."

She had heard that before the big commotion that had happened in Grendan, they had already been completely eliminated.

"Therefore....."

What was the reason for this kind of feeling?

What would happen?

Before Nina had time to ponder, a change suddenly appeared, happening at an intense pace.

"!"

The scene of the resting room that was covered with darkness gradually disappeared, being replaced with other things, and only Claribel and Nina remained where they were.

The scenery slowly became a hand without its five fingers, in a pitch-black space containing nothing else.

Afterwards, there was a being emitting radiance.

What appeared next was.....

"You are....."

"Have you completed honing yourself?"

Standing before Nina was her great-grandfather.

Gildred Antalk stood there.

He gazed at Nina with his arms crossed.

Moreover, behind him emitting radiance in the darkness was the Electronic Fairy Schneibel.

"This place is..... En?"

The information network space between the Electronic Fairies.

Nina had come here before.

"Nn, it is."

For Claribel next to her, it should be her first time coming here. She murmured interestedly, moving her gaze left and right.

".....Then, this person is the legendary great-grandfather?"

"Grendan's princess, eh."

Claribel's words made Gildred open his mouth.

"It's my first time meeting you, mother of the Electronic Fairies - Electronic Fairy Schneibel of the Senou City, and your guardian. My name is Claribel, Claribel Ronsmier, descendant of the Ronsmier family of Grendan's Three Royal Families. As for the status, since I left my home, I don't know what it has turned into."

"My old self is Gildred Antalk."

Claribel's almost unmoving attitude made Gildred show a wry smile, as he replied like this.

"Nice to meet you. Then, can I ask what you are doing?"

The chaotic and cautious mindset brought by the sudden change in situation made Nina unable to speak. Claribel asked questions in her place.

"Pardon me, but this has nothing to do with Grendan's princess, it's a family matter."

"Is that so."

"Can I ask you to step aside?"

"I refuse."

Her reply while she wore a smile froze the wry smile on Gildred's face.

"What did you say?"

"Though it's a family matter, the topic being brought up here shouldn't be unrelated to me. More importantly, if you decide anything regarding Nina, then that problem is related to me and Zuellni."

Claribel spoke smoothly, not succumbing to the oppressive feeling that Gildred gave off.

"......After all the one who decided that Zuellni was the enemy of the world was Schneibel standing over there."

"Ah, is that how it is."

"Clara."

After Gildred showed a pondering demeanor, Nina observed that a space had appeared in the brief conversation. Nina grabbed Claribel's arm, pulling her to her side.

"......You got used to it quickly."

Nina couldn't have done it.

"It was only a bluff, does it even need to be said?"

The quiet reply made Nina widen her eyes in surprise.

"But, he's not as frightening as our Majesty."

Claribel winked an eye and smiled.

"I don't know what objectives they have, but maybe they want you."

"When we were in that empty city, great-grandfather also asked for me to return."

"Therefore, perhaps they really want you to return. Thinking deeper, it's fine even if they just want your strength to return, though I don't know if they have some deeper reason behind them. "

"Mm."

Nina didn't know either.

She had known since before that her home city was a special place that could give birth to Electronic Fairies, but she knew nothing at all about any deeper truth. That state of affairs seemed to go well with the tense situation, as if a layer of secrets was going to be lifted before Nina.

The speed at which the situation changed was far too rapid, and Nina had no time to understand.

After all, she had just been in the resting room, and suddenly arrived in this kind of place.

"I noticed the Electronic Fairy behind him hasn't said a single word until now."

"Shouldn't your chat over there be about finished by now?"

Just as Nina was about to look along Claribel's gaze, Gildred interjected his words.

"For this time I'll let the princess join in as well."

"Thank you very much."

"......Then, can I ask what it is that great-grandfather needs?"

"I originally thought that just coming to visit wasn't a problem, but Schneibel voiced objections."

Facing the embattled Nina, Gildred said this, arms crossed.

"Huh?"

Nina looked at Schneibel, but the Electronic Fairy behind the old man stayed quiet.

The old man released the arms crossed in front of him.

He extended his hand to Nina.

"Come back, Nina. You have a body that has fused with an Electronic Fairy, and have nurtured a strong will to command the Haikizoku. You should no longer be a normal Military Artist, and you have the opportunity to become the strongest Military Artist in the Senou City."

Gildred's voice was quite hard, reverberating heavily in all directions.

He was praising Nina.

The arm that he extended out was clearly reflected in Nina's eyes.

"The final preparations for facing fate are here."

For some reason, Gildred's words made Nina tremble. The lonely feeling she had experienced in Grendan of not being able to rely on anyone now seemed as if it had been treated. That kind of feeling made Nina unable to stop trembling.

However.....

"What will happen to Zuellni?"

Schneibel considered Zuellni that had accepted Vati Len the world's enemy, and Gildred had once come to destroy it. Once Nina left Zuellni, the Electronic Fairies might attack this place as soon as they could.

"We will continue to monitor Zuellni. If that thing takes action, this place will become a battleground."

"That....."

"Where else do you want to fight? Do you think that thing will allow us to choose the battleground?"

"Wu....."

"Ignoring for now whether it's evil or not, the fact that thing is there will not change, and the fact that it is very dangerous will not change."

".....If we let those people obtain their freedom that they have desired for so long, this world will definitely be eliminated. Whatever happens, they can only be the enemy of us Electronic Fairies."

Schneibel spoke.

"Freedom.....?"

"This world is a man-made thing. The reason for which it was made is maintained by us Electronic Fairies to this day."

"You said man-made.....?"

Nina felt quite surprised at the words that came out of Schneibel's mouth, but the Electronic Fairy ignored her surprise, continuing to speak by herself:

"Fighting since the birth of this world and clashing with those things is an unavoidable ending. But we do not plan on giving this entire fate to the Military Artists gathered in their ancestor city. Though we were created, we still have our pride as those who maintain the world. We are taking action, preparing to bring our strongest guardians to counter this danger."

"Could it be that.....?"

"The Haikizoku is also one of them."

"Along with the fusing with Electronic Fairies."

Gildred and Schneibel alternated saying these.

Then, her great-grandfather continued speaking:

"The so-called Electronic Fairies are beings that maintain this world and the people in it, high-energy lives with more knowledge and conscious. The descendants of the moon known as Military Artists can draw on this energy, using it to aid them. This is the method the Electronic Fairies have spent a long time on to make in order to fight against fate, and this old man has also accepted that kind of method."

"Is that why great-grandfather has such longevity?"

"Half of my old body already can only be maintained through the electronic bonds of the Electronic Fairies."

"Meaning that you have given up your identity as a human?"

If almost all of his body was the same as the Electronic Fairies, that meant her great-grandfather's body was the same as the the young body that composed Nina's acquaintance Zuellni.

The existence of his body had already become just an anchor to let his feet touch the ground. Her great-grandfather didn't need to breathe, eat, or sleep, and received energy directly from liquid selenium.

He was already no longer human.

Even if Nina asked this, Gildred's expression didn't move.

"What are humans to you? Are they beings that achieve things during their life, or are they beings that give birth to offspring, and help them grow up?"

"That....."

"I don't want to judge what is good and what is bad. Both sides are necessary. But which side do you plan on being? If it's the latter, then things are easily handled. But if it's the former, what do you plan on achieving?"

"....."

This question was too sudden and serious, and Nina couldn't quickly make an answer.

However, she continued to search for an answer.

The road ahead was a battlefield out of the ordinary, and her great-grandfather who stood in front of her had lived long before Nina, long before her father or grandfather, continuously laboring to prepare for this battlefield.

Compared to the serious consciousness hidden inside, Nina wasn't even worth mentioning.

If Nina wanted to walk the same path as her great-grandfather, the giant wave that she had formed herself would pull her into things without any explanation, in spite of herself.

"I....."

"You still have time, you don't need to answer immediately."

Gildred stopped Nina who had opened her mouth but completely had no idea what she should say.

"Great-grandfather.....?"

"Before this, we never had any time to talk, but this old man feels that there is a reason to tell you about the way this side thinks , so we set up this place."

Gildred's tone seemed to be mixed with some slight distortion. Schneibel behind her great-grandfather's back was silent. However , Nina felt that her gaze from beginning to end stared at her great-grandfather's back.

The distance that existed between Nina and Gildred was somewhat unnatural.

But, was the distance that Nina felt between Gildred and Schneibel even more strongly unnatural?

(What's going on with this kind of atmosphere?)

"I will make a connection between you and Schneibel. As for how to use it, the Haikizoku in your body should know. Tidy up your thoughts and then return."

"Great-grandfather."

"Then, tonight we'll end here."

Nina didn't have an opportunity to unravel the mystery in her heart. With Gildred's unilateral declaration, this talk that had been carried out one-sidedly ended like this.

"......Ah?"

"Oh?"

Nina unconsciously let out a sound, and Claribel also showed an admiring expression.

The two of them stood outside the practice battlefield.

"The other side is rather thoughtful."

"......Weren't our bags in the resting room?"

The two of them held nothing in their hands.

"Ah....."

In the end, Nina had put the key to her room in her clothes pocket, so they shouldn't need to worry. But-

"Wuu....."

Claribel seemed to have put her key in her bag.

"Just come to my place to sleep for tonight."

".....Nn, sorry to bother."

".....Anyway, I think that today was really an incredible day."

Only after whispering this did Nina notice that the fatigue that she had originally washed away in the shower room had once again pervaded every corner of her body.

During the night that Nina and Claribel had their fantastic experience.

Layfon was in a place that even he felt he was incompatible with.

"Ahahahahah! How cute~"

"Please..... Please don't do this."

"Don't say that, let me see your face clearly."

The unfamiliar girl put her hand on his cheek, moving her face close. Layfon was afraid enough he thought of escaping, but on his other side there was another girl, and she also prepared to put her face close to Layfon.

In other words, Layfon was being attacked from left and right and had nowhere to run.

The clothes that the two girls wore were short and had large slits, giving off a looming flirtatious presence, which to Layfon was far too much stimulation.

He had absolutely no idea where he should put his gaze.

The lights here were turned very dim. Noisy music was disrupted by the chatting that came over from the next table, and his own volume involuntarily rose.

The place in front of Layfon was one of Zuellni's very few hostess clubs.

He didn't know why he was here.

This kind of shop was rare, as the number of girls who wanted to do this kind of work wasn't large, and also only half of the

students were old enough to drink. Of course, Layfon even being at such a place was already teetering at the edge of the school rules .

"Oh, his skin is even better than I expected."

"I thought it would be a bit rougher."

"That.....uh....."

Being intimately touched all over by the two girls, Layfon's mind was chaotic, tense to the point where he couldn't move.

"Sen.....Senpai....."

Layfon looked at the person on the other side of the table, the culprit who had brought him to this place, for help.

"You should relax once in a while, isn't always being so tense tiring?"

"Is..... Is that the problem?"

That person was Sharnid.

Because something had happened, Layfon couldn't return to his room, and could only wander the streets of Zuellni alone. At that time, Sharnid had seen him, and moreover for some reason brought him to this kind of shop.

The two girls leaned over from left and right, even extending their hands to touch his face and hair, and before he realized it,

they were preparing to unbutton his shirt. Layfon frantically held his clothing, and this action also made Sharnid laugh out loud.

"In this kind of time you can only go wild, right?"

"'This kind of time', meaning....."

Layfon hadn't said anything to Sharnid.

"I think that from tomorrow, the food in your bento might become a bit poor..... Aren't things like that?"

"Wuah!"

That sharp comment made Layfon think of his tense feelings at the time, and he pressed his hand against his chest.

"Ah, emotion is good, but there are a lot of difficult areas. So the best way is to go wild and forget everything."

"What? Could it be that Layfon was rejected?"

"Huh... No way! What a waste!"

"Ah, no, um....."

"Right right, that's how it is, so would you girls please comfort him."

"Ahh, how unfortunate, let onee-chan comfort you."

"Why don't you come over here then? Come!"

"Huh? No, uwa, uwaaaaah!"

Due to Sharnid's instigation, the girls by Layfon flattered him, leaning their bodies against him as if they wanted to push him over.

They almost casually unbuttoned Layfon's shirt, even preparing to extend their fangs toward his pants.

"Uwah, wait a second! Please stop, I said!"

If he got serious, pushing aside two normal girls would pose no difficulty, but Layfon couldn't do this kind of thing to normal people. Moreover the current Layfon's mind was chaotic, so he might not be able to control his strength, so he could do nothing but be manipulated.

Layfon's outer layer of clothing had been taken off, his shirt was unbuttoned, his pants had been halfway pulled down, and the boxers inside were revealed.

Sharnid's loud laughter, the girls' inexplicable excitement, and the loud music and dim lighting in the shop.

"Stop thereee!"

Layfon let out a voice that he didn't understand, and also moved his body in a manner he didn't understand.

"Yaah!"

The two girls definitely felt that from Layfon's body suddenly blew a strong wind. Moreover, though the strength of this wind was strong, the force was very gentle, not sending the two of them flying, rather applying force all over their bodies as if trying to lift them up. To put it simply, the two girls gently floated upwards in that moment.

As if trying to extract himself from that space, Layfon escaped from the two of them surrounding him. His speed was obviously very fast. The almost unreserved speed of a Military Artist whipped up a small tornado in the store, and the sound of screams and breaking glass mixed together.

"......It seems like I made a new move just now."

After escaping from the shop at high speed and rushing into an alley, Layfon put on his pants while mumbling.

"Nn, the power just now was controlled very well, where could it come in handy?"

"Even at a time like this that's what you're thinking of?"

The surprised voice was obviously Sharnid's.

"......Senpai, there's something I don't really understand."

"Have you relaxed?"

"What do you mean relaxed....."

But, Layfon indeed felt that the pressure in his stomach had become lighter.

"Ah, although that kind of feeling wouldn't disappear that easily."

"Wu!"

"But being troubled by that kind of feeling is youth."

"Senpai, what was that just now?"

"Just call it relaxation, relaxation. If that kind of feeling could disappear in a breath, there would be no need for relaxation."

"Oh....."

Layfon felt that he had been cleverly deceived.

"Ah, let's chat a bit, you don't want to return yet, right?"

"......Okay."

If he returned right now he shouldn't run into her. But, just thinking of her being there, Layfon felt tense.

A sinful feeling had definitely pervaded every corner of his entire body.

"Then let's look for a quiet place, that place is way too noisy."

"......Uh, the person who brought me there was senpai....."

"So~ I'm~ saying~ did you relax?"

Sharnid said this kind of thing while leading Layfon into the alley in front of them.

"How dirty....."

This was an empty area that was occasionally created when building houses. Though no one was here right now, occasionally people would gather here. This place was covered in trash, and a sour smell firmly lingered.

"I'm definitely not going to use power in my nose, I'd die."

The so-called using of power obviously meant using internal Kei to strengthen his senses.

After Sharnid smiled, he threw a can of fruit juice at Layfon. On the road, Sharnid hadn't stopped at any vending machine, so maybe he had gotten this fruit juice from the shop just now.

"Oh right, who took the initiative?"

"Huh?"

"No, seeing your expression, I can probably guess what happened. But in order to avoid an unnecessary misunderstanding , I wanted to ask to clear things up..... who took the initiative to confess?"

"....."

"Ah- as expected, it wasn't you. In other words, Meishen took the initiative? Ah, anyone would be surprised."

"That, senpai, you couldn't have....."

"Nn?"

"You couldn't have noticed?"

Layfon was indicating Meishen's feelings.

"Aren't you and Nina the only ones who didn't notice? No, it's uncertain whether Nina knew."

"Wu!"

"Well, if you were a master of love, we probably wouldn't be friends. So this is alright."

".....It doesn't make me happy to be comforted like this."

Everybody had noticed, and only he had been unaware.

Because of that, he had hurt Meishen.

"You shouldn't have any reason to keep caring about this, right?
"

"But....."

"Figuratively speaking, suppose you like someone, and the other person always knew your feelings, but never said so. Would that make you happy?"

"....."

"Moreover you got the courage to confess, but were rejected. Maybe you would think to complain to the other party that since you were rejected, why didn't they give some signal before your confession?"

"Wuu....."

Being told this, Layfon's stomach started hurting again. Having mistakenly accepted all of Meishen's feelings till now thinking they were the good intentions of a friend, Layfon could only feel quite ashamed, as well as very sorrowful.

Facing this kind of Layfon, Sharnid slapped him on the back as if he wanted to hurt him.

"Didn't I say? It doesn't matter even if you didn't notice. In this kind of situation, neither the person who rejects nor the person who gets rejected is wrong."

"......Nn."

Layfon felt that Sharnid hadn't said anything wrong, but the fact that he had hurt Meishen still made him feel heavy.

"If you opened your mouth to confess, and the other party was gloomy because he couldn't receive it, would you be happy?"

"......Probably not."

"Then you shouldn't stay gloomy."

"Oh....."

Layfon could understand the meaning that Sharnid was trying to express.

However, he couldn't easily switch his emotions.

Meishen had confessed to him. Being unable to respond to her expectations became a very serious issue to Layfon.

Sharnid also said nothing more. If he could hear a proposal from his mouth that could end this, then he would have no reason to continue staying in this place. After all, this place made Layfon feel very uneasy. Truthfully, Layfon hated the sinister atmosphere in the alley, and it could be said that he couldn't come to like the playful atmosphere of the night.

"Then, let's switch topics."

Though Layfon didn't want to return to his room, he didn't want to stay here for long either. As he was thinking of how he should express this, Sharnid said something like this:

"Today's combat training."

"Huh? Yes."

The topic suddenly turned, and moreover it was related to the practice battlefield, making Layfon tense up.

"Do you know what Nina is doing?"

"......No."

Layfon knew that something was happening, but he had not heard what it was from Nina.

If she couldn't tell anyone, then he would figure it out on his own, he would grab onto it on his own and not let go. Layfon had decided this, and had told Nina of his determination in the empty city. As expected, she hadn't said anything. She hadn't even said ' you're mistaken' or 'you're thinking too much', so she was indeed hiding something.

More importantly, the two of them had met Gildred in the empty city.

Strictly speaking..... maybe he didn't completely know nothing.

However, Layfon felt that his way of thinking perhaps wasn't too far from Sharnid's guess.

"Expressing that kind of attitude obviously would make someone perceive that she was hiding something. I should say, if it wasn't like this, you wouldn't have any reason to accompany her in carrying out training like today's, right?"

"....."

The aggressive pressing feeling made Layfon unable to say a word.

"I don't mean to blame you. I should say this problem is the same as before, all because that person likes to keep things closed in her heart."

"Nn."

"In any case, perhaps there's some reason for her not being able to speak the truth, maybe she's been intimidated like before."

".....What does senpai think?"

"Nn?"

"What should we do next....."

"That's just it, it really is."

In a bad mood, Sharnid threw the can that he had finished drinking high in the air. The empty can flew through the night in the alley, and just when Layfon thought it was going to fall back down, a loud noise sounded out, and the can once again flew up in the air.

Looking over, Sharnid was using his finger to shoot out small bursts of Kei. That had launched the can in the sky upwards.

"That person mustered her strength, and teamed up with Clara, acquiring enough strength to win against you. If there's an enemy they truly need that kind of strength to win against, then isn't that a place where I don't need to appear?"

Bang, bang, bang.....

Sharnid continuously fired off Kei bursts to keep the can from falling as he spoke.

"That....."

The situation was like that. But, Layfon couldn't put it into words.

He only needed to look back to the battle in the empty city, and he clearly understood it. The giants Nina fought with seemed to also be Gildred's enemies.

Therefore, those giants were the beings that Nina and them fought against.

Seeing Nina fighting let him understand the strength of the giants. They had fighting power close to aged phases.

If the enemy was truly a being that could relaxedly use these sorts of creatures, then from now on, would there be any time that they could turn to Sharnid for help?

Probably not.

However, Layfon had no way to say this to Sharnid.

"Ah, I think it's like that."

Facing Layfon who couldn't say half a word, Sharnid quietly mumbled the conclusion he had reached himself.

The can in the air still hadn't fallen. Sharnid obviously wasn't looking at the can, but the Kei bursts shot from his finger hadn't missed.

Compared to a year before, Sharnid's power had also increased. Whether it was Sakkei, shooting techniques, or methods of releasing Kei, he had undoubtedly made notable progress.

Even so, he couldn't catch up to the strength required to join the battlefield.

Even thinking about the battle before with the giants, Layfon couldn't think of a way to use Sharnid's kind of battle strength.

Guns had a limit to their power. However, if their power were increased, the Kei strength required during shooting would

increase alongside. If it were the current Sharnid, even if he slightly increased the power of his guns, he could still perform on the battlefield like before. But this degree of power wasn't any use on the battlefield.

When they had infiltrated Grendan, Sharnid had once let Layfon see a move regarding special Kei breathing that increased his Kei power. Though he knew this kind of technique, this move seemed to have a time limit.

It wasn't impossible. But this kind of fighting method perhaps could only be effective in conditions harsher than shooting.

This was the conclusion that Layfon derived.

".....I feel that it would be very dangerous."

After saying this, Layfon felt extremely pained.

Why was this? Layfon thought that as long as it had something to do with Military Arts, he could use an objective view to provide commentary, and in a breath he could even become calm enough to make others think that he had become someone else. Not long ago he had thought that himself being like this was very shameful, but in that case, why had he just said something like that?

".....Is that so?"

Bang, bang, bang.....

Sharnid let the can continue floating in the sky as he murmured:

"No difference. By now, regardless of your judgment, and whatever Nina is planning on doing, it isn't important."

"....."

"In the end, the important thing is what I want to do."

Layfon was also like this. Layfon thought that Nina was concealing something, and moreover was planning something, so she took action. Though Layfon actually was endlessly training, compared to Felli who was preparing to analyze Delbone's heritage, it didn't count for much, but he still was always waiting for an opportunity to touch the secret in Nina's heart.

And the event that had happened in the empty city had let Layfon come in contact with it.

He determined that Nina's heart held a secret.

He decided that regardless of what happened, he would tightly grab onto this secret and not let go.

Though that was only Layfon, it also represented the resolve in Felli's heart who had also decided to follow Layfon.

It wasn't related to Sharnid.

But, if he simply concluded that he had nothing to do with it, he would be ignoring the things that had happened in the past year. Truthfully, it was too emotionless.

Therefore, why hadn't he said it to Sharnid.....?

Nina's reasons and Layfon's reasons were different, and it was only right that they were different.

Then, what would Layfon do?

"Senpai....."

"Oh, not saying anything extra? Didn't I say, this is something I will decide. This fate is my own. If you feel that my death will create difficulties, then aren't you the same as someone ignoring my existence and making their own decisions? The situation is like that."

"....."

"I don't want to think about what you based your judgments on to decide not to tell me about this. Therefore, I can only make my own decisions and take my own actions. If you feel that I'm very irritating, then include me in things. If you can't do it, then don't mind me, alright?"

".....I myself don't know what to do."

"Ah, I thought as much, maybe even Nina doesn't even know what to do. There's something impending, and she definitely thinks that as long as she becomes strong she can overcome this obstacle, which is why she teamed up with Clara, right? Though the situation should be related to Grendan."

Sharnid spoke casually. But, the feeling hidden in his words made Layfon feel that it was hard to breathe.

This kind of feeling was probably anger. Sharnid was getting angry wearing his normal, casual face. Was he angry at Nina who had hidden secrets from him? Or was it Layfon who was chasing the secrets, but refused to include him in it? Perhaps it was both of them?

Bang, bang, bang.....

The sound continued.

"What's annoying is, I myself also agree with the judgments of the people around me."

"Senpai, that....."

"I think someone like me probably won't have the chance to enter the field. I truly think so. Is that a calm judgment? Is it really like that? Am I actually just frustrated? In the battlefield before, I could get carried away because I had a hidden weapon, but I also understand that move can't be used often."

Sharnid's low murmur didn't require a response from Layfon.

"I truly am an unreliable senpai, huh."

Pow!

The sound of the can in the air breaking shook the cold air.

The air shook weakly.

The feeling that seeped from Sharnid's body made Layfon's heart grieve.

"......It's not like that."

He couldn't help but mumble.

"What unreliable senpai, things really aren't like that."

"But isn't that the truth?"

"Even if you aren't enough now, that doesn't mean things will end like this."

Why had his heart suffered a blow? It wasn't because of sympathy, definitely not.

"I don't have any way to force senpai, but if senpai wants to do this, there's definitely somewhere that senpai can help."

These words weren't for comfort.

Layfon himself was confident in this.

In Grendan, Leerin had pushed him away.

And Nina didn't say anything to him.

These two things were definitely connected somehow, and Gildred had also asserted that this had nothing to do with him.

Gildred said that Leerin and Nina gazed at something ahead, and Layfon definitely could not come close.

Even so, Layfon still hadn't lost hope. If the situation now was a result of his life up to now that was like drifting with the current, he couldn't continue being manipulated by others.

"Even if others make their decisions, as long as I have something I want to do, isn't it fine if I follow my mind and do it?"

By now, what other people wanted didn't matter.

He could only take action by himself.

"Because other people guide us."

"That's true, very correct."

After letting out a long sigh, Sharnid mumbled this.

"I feel like I've let you hear a lot of complaints."

"It's alright, it wasn't much."

"......Thanks."

Getting up, Sharnid gave thanks. This word truly surprised Layfon, and he widened his eyes.

"Ah, right."

"Huh?"

"Let's go back and sleep!"

"Uh..... I..... I know."

Because he thought of that situation which was very difficult to forget, Layfon creased his brow. Seeing his response, Sharnid laughed, and then left first, alone.

"......Hahh, I really don't want to go back."

Embracing an intriguing feeling that felt both very refreshing and very serious, Layfon began walking.

Because, regardless of what happened, he could only move forward.

According to the forecast, the probability of this situation occurring was five percent.

However, she also thought that the judgment that the probability was five percent was the same as not knowing anything. Particularly in these situations that could not be repeated, and only for these conclusions that weren't win-lose.

Before the reality of the conclusion, other possibilities had no meaning. Even if she simulated it ten thousand times, she couldn't make the same amount of successes and failures. In this kind of time, perhaps simulations were useless.

However, even so, the reason she had selected this girl was because the chance of success was five percent.

"In other words, the meaning is that I never decided what conclusion I wanted to see in the first place?"

She asked this of herself. But, she actually feared that. She had arrived to the world mechanically, her body appearing as an ambiguous entity. In order to analyze it, she had deliberately chosen an ambiguous entity to be the control group that she would continue to observe.

She observed the many males and females in the Academy City, analyzing them, and finally selecting these two.

The maiden who only got along with her family and two childhood friends, enclosed in a narrow relationship. The teenager who had been defeated and lost his life's goal, whose gaze had become narrow.

The maiden was in an unrequited love for the teenager, but the teenager's narrow gaze kept him from noticing such feelings.

But, if the teenager had been able to notice what he had been chasing after, the maiden's love might have blossomed.

Regardless of how the past and future were investigated, she understood what it meant. This definitely wasn't a love that could not blossom.

But, it still hadn't become reality.

What was the reason?

The teenager's sensibility was very clear. Then, if she expressed her will at an earlier stage, and produced slow changes like saturating something with water, this love could perhaps have succeeded.

But, now it was too late. Though she didn't know the reason that had caused her to make this decision, she had still taken action , and reached this conclusion.

Was it over like this?

Meishen should have thought this way, evidenced by the shaking filling her room.

".....But, my investigation has not finished."

It could even be said that it had only just started.

"Come, let me see it."

Vati spoke quietly. She stayed in her room alone, observing Meishen's room that her eyes shouldn't have been able to see as she murmured.

She observed Meishen who was weeping on her bed.

"The future will come."

Vati didn't know how long it would be till she could see the answer. Regardless of whether the end Meishen reached was the answer that Vati expected, this temporary assignment would terminate because of it. Afterwards, Vati would take action according to her original schedule.

"If everything will end, perhaps doing this is almost meaningless....."

However, if she wanted to find significance, everything would become almost meaningless. Because this world would reach an end, along with the things Vati expected.....

"......It's okay, since this is only the actions of machinery. Whether it has meaning depends on the values of the craftsman."

Therefore, her current self should conform with her craftsman's expectations, right?

The functions expected by Ignasis, who had not been sealed in the moon, and had created Vati - Nano-Celluloid Interface 1 Lævateinn.

Perhaps, this was a function Vati had acquired by herself?

The desire to understand human emotions.

Perhaps she had believed herself close to humans, and had arrived on the world with that attitude.

No, that's how things were.

"......But, I can't be a human. Even if I could, I still....."

Vati stopped the soliloquizing that had become a habit, swallowing the words in her mouth.

As expected, the second half of that murmur was almost meaningless.

However, what Vati chased after was that kind of meaningless thing.

Chapter 3 - Summer Night's Mistress

In Grendan, someone opened his mouth to begin saying the words 'so hot'.

Though the sunshine wasn't that strong in the first place, it was very humid, because the air that was able to pass through the filter had the unsuitable portions discharged outside the filter. Though the air exchangers extending under the city would discharge moisture and heat, in the humid heat brought by this summer season, it was hard to say if it could perform at one hundred percent efficiency.

In other words, it was very hot and stuffy here.

"Ah~ How hot~"

Even opening the window to let wind flow into the room didn't disperse the humidity in the room. Even though it was clearly night, one would feel that even the wind that brushed by felt sticky, increasing one's perspiration.

.....However, the sounds of complaint weren't from someone inside the room.

"......Why would you be here?"

Leerin, who had been concentrating on studying, put down her pen, turning the chair to face backwards.

Over there was Alsheyra's listless figure.

This was Leerin's room in the Eutnohl house. Leerin who had lived in the orphanage was living here alone, studying in the vast room that she didn't know what to do with.

.....However, Alsheyra had somehow appeared in the room.

She definitely hadn't notified the family members beforehand. The bitter expression of Minse who was her uncle and householder appeared in Leerin's mind.

But, the queen completely ignored Leerin's thoughts, and did whatever she wanted like usual.

"Hey, why don't you turn on the air conditioning?"

Alsheyra lazily lied on the sofa, fanning her chest while asking.

The remote for the air conditioner was by Leerin's side.

"Because it's a waste that way. The room is so big, how can I turn on the air conditioner just for myself?"

"Leerin's so thrifty. On this side, wouldn't it be nice to live an elegant life like royalty? If the people on top aren't happy, the people underneath can't be happy either."

"It's enough if Your Majesty does that. The Eutnohl family is already poor enough, we don't need to do something like that. Might as well say that Your Majesty should also be thrifty in your personal life."

"Even including air conditioning expenses?"

"Correct."

"Ah, I live in the palace, so it doesn't seem like anyone pays air conditioning fees over there."

The people who worked in the palace numbered many, and the number of people who came to the palace to handle affairs were also many. That was a place that couldn't go without air conditioning.

"......Then, why have you come here?"

Leerin pulled the topic back, asking once again.

"Nn-? Because I'm idle?"

"......Your Majesty?"

"Ah, no, no. It's that, that. How should I say it? It's that! I'm actually very busy, but for now I have some time, or perhaps I should say I can't tidy up the thoughts in my head. In the end, it's a kind of idle where I want to drink a cup of tea with you."

Her surprised look made Alsheyra flustered, so Leerin sighed, and opened her mouth to press on:

"The reconstruction of the city has largely come to an end, but the problem of the reduced reserves of resources still hasn't been solved."

"Yes, yes, yes- I know-"

"......Ah, but if the city doesn't return to a mine, we won't be able to gather other resources."

"Right right, it's all Grendan's fault, who asked it not to go to the mine, huh. If that guy went over to the mine nicely, my toiling could be cut in half, you know!"

"Even if you complain about that to me, I also can't do anything. ..... Moreover isn't Grendan Your Majesty's Haikizoku?"

The topic had just come to this, so Leerin voiced the question that she had had doubts about before.

"Nn..... honestly, it is my Haikizoku, but originally this city belonged to Saya, and it seems like it was sheltered by Saya after it had lost its way, and entrusted to her the functions of the city."

"Oh....."

Saya was the entity that had created this world, and was the prototype of the autonomous cities. Strictly speaking, she was not an Electronic Fairy. The autonomous cities had been born into the world according to this prototype, and the Electronic Fairies were the beings produced in order to regulate them.

"So it's not the same as the Zuellni girl from before, it's not firmly attached to my body."

The Zuellni girl from before meant Nina.

Though this way of expression had some problems, Leerin understood Alsheyra's meaning.

"If Grendan's original role has been given to Saya to control, then why would he help Your Majesty?"

"You call it help, but maybe if the kind of thing from last time hadn't happened, I wouldn't even need it. Wanna see it, my Kei power is very strong, even a Heaven's Blade would be endangered ."

"Heaven's Blades can't completely bear your strength?"

"Nn~ I never tried seriously, but I think it probably couldn't. So when I use my whole power, I usually use up Dites like consumables, but Heaven's Blades can't be discarded, right?"

"Nn, that's true."

"So I asked Grendan to make an imitation Heaven's Blade, perhaps something similar to a Heaven's Blade, so that I could use it."

"I see, that's what it was."

The appearance of Alsheyra back then casting from her hands the spear that Grendan had made really left a deep impression.

"What, what? Are you interested in me?"

"Obviously not."

"Hmph!"

After the sound of knocking and Leerin replying, Eldein's face peeked into the room.

"Your Highness, we've come to supply you with tea....."

Speaking up to there, Eldein suddenly stopped speaking. After seeing Alsheyra in the room, his whole face stiffened.

"......Hm, I didn't scare him away, I guess that's progress, right?"

Alsheyra spoke mischievously. A similar situation had happened before, and back then Eldein had been very surprised, even dropping the things in his hands everywhere.

"Your..... Your Majesty....."

"Though, speaking of you, you're supposed to be a bodyguard, but now you've already become Leerin's servant."

"Uh..... I haven't thought of that."

Eldein who looked a bit weak in the first place showed a worried expression, looking to have no trace of being a Military Artist.

"......Hm? Since that's the case, why don't you just serve as Leerin's personal attendant altogether?"

"Huh? Huhhh?"

"Your Majesty, that's very discourteous."

Eldein's extremely surprised expression made Leerin open her mouth to correct the Queen.

"Really? Being a personal attendant isn't bad."

"That's not the important point....."

The queen hadn't moved, but also hadn't moved her gaze from Eldein. She once again asked:

"What do you think?"

"Huh? Ah....."

"Do you want to try being Leerin's attendant? Or do you not?"

"Eldein, even if she's Her Majesty, you don't need to be polite."

"Why? Isn't that good? Working to guard the princess, doesn't that get your blood boiling?"

"What are you saying?"

"Ah, I..... No, I don't mind being an attendant of Your Highness. Please allow me to take this job!"

Eldein stood up straight and said this, surprising Leerin, while Alsheyra showed a cunning smile.

"See, that's what he decided."

"Eldein....."

As Eldein seemed to have been fooled by the Queen, Leerin could only feel a headache.

"What are you noisy about?"

Just then, Minse walked in.

"Hi."

"...........Even if we're relatives, running into someone else's house whenever you feel like it isn't very commendable."

Facing Alsheyra who had raised her hand in greeting without remorse, a bitter expression appeared on Minse's face.

"Aha, isn't it good this way? Now you know about another security vulnerability."

"......Meaning that the vulnerability you can exploit, other people can also exploit?"

"I can think of about ten or so names, I guess?"

"If they think of rebellion, that means that Your Majesty is too little-known, it has nothing to do with Leerin."

"Hmph! Minse is being mean!"

"The situation has been the Queen bullying her subordinates."

Leerin unconsciously paid attention to Minse's reply, thinking in her heart that she had learned something new.

However, regardless of what Minse said, in the end everyone still were being led by the nose by Alsheyra, and the room became a clamorous mess, and the time flowed by noisily.

Up until the Eutnohl head maid, wearing her sleeping clothes, angrily charged in shouting, "It's time to sleep!", this commotion continued on.

"Hahh- really....."

After being shooed away, Alsheyra turned her head to look at the entrance of the Eutnohl house.

The door that had been closed by the impatient maid looked as if it were still vibrating. Alsheyra showed a wry smile, her gaze moving along the surrounding wall, and then along the entire mansion.

She was searching for a presence.

She confirmed the building, courtyard, and the surrounding walls..... there were no unfamiliar presences, and Alsheyra let out a sigh.

Lintence should be somewhere. Though she couldn't immediately read his presence, the presences of his steel threads were spread all over.

"Oho, not bad....."

Not being able to instantly find someone's presence made Alsheyra show a happy expression. It wasn't too much to say Lintence was the strongest Heaven's Blade, but even he couldn't oppose Alsheyra.

When they had first met, before the two of them had been able to begin a great battle suitable to their strong powers, Alsheyra's fist had struck the bridge of Lintence's nose, almost shattering his body and mind and ending everything.

The two people had such a difference in power between them. But, this difference of power had gradually narrowed over the years.

"By now, we should be able to play for a while, huh?"

Perhaps, might she lose?

Even if currently, Alsheyra still had a landslide victory in terms of brute force. However, if her attack were evaded once, it would be hard to say what the battle would become.

This possibility made Alsheyra somewhat happy. From her birth, Alsheyra had never once lost in battle. Because her strength was far too great, her opportunities to enter the battlefields had been almost zero, and she had lived like that up to now.

She knew many Military Artists who were addicted to combat, but completely couldn't understand their pleasure. Because she had only experienced battles that she couldn't possibly lose. Moments of life and death were impossible for Alsheyra.

"Ahh, but there was some good fun before."

That creature seemed to have been called Durindana.

Durindana had killed Tigris and Delbone, and destroyed the city where she had grown up. Though Alsheyra couldn't forgive it, from another perspective, that battle allowed her to raise her strength to its limits, and had also given her an excited feeling she had never had before.

Alsheyra wanted to once again experience that kind of battle. To Alsheyra who didn't experience any kind of stimulation during battle, and for whom it was too late to escape from the burden of fate on her back, the battle with Durindana was her first stimulating battle.

If her opponent became Lintence, could she experience that kind of feeling?

She wanted to try it out.

But, she feared it was a battle that couldn't be carried out.

Because of the coming battle, the more fighting power they had, the better.

"It would be good if it's a war of that level."

The emotions of Alsheyra as she anticipated the next battleground overcame the desire to fight with Lintence.

At the least, it wouldn't be weaker than Durindana, right?

But, regardless of how strong the enemy was, as long as her own strength became stronger, the outcome would be the same as before. Then, she had to do this.

Leerin's existence was like that.

If Alsheyra's body was the reappearance of the bodies of her Military Artist ancestors, then Leerin was the continuation of the ancestors who had first possessed a different special power.

If the opponent was a huge enemy related to the creation of the world, then this side also had to obtain this kind of strength that could oppose that enemy.

"It's that easy."

Alsheyra had been born for this objective, so she could only do this. In the first place, she couldn't say that she didn't want to do it, and she was helpless even if she did say it. Moreover, she also knew that if she didn't do it, no one else could.

To put it simply, this was the biggest reason that she didn't feel that she was carrying a heavy burden.

"Ah..... that's how it is."

Alsheyra casually walked on the road back home, while unconsciously thinking about that situation. But, she suddenly observed something.

"Damn, shouldn't this actually be a big discovery?"

As her body gradually accepted this fact, Alsheyra's mood became more and more excited.

By now, she was no longer calm.

She immediately took action.

Once she returned there was work waiting for her, so she walked slowly on the road. However, that appearance wasn't depressed. Alsheyra moved at a speed faster than the wind, running to the origin of the presence that she had detected in a moment.

".....What are you doing?"

Alsheyra appeared suddenly, but Lintence who was lying on the roof didn't show a trace of surprise.

"I noticed something amazing!"

"What thing?"

Lintence completely ignored the Queen's excited voice, moody as usual.

But, the Queen wouldn't care about that.

"It's really incredible!"

"I'm asking you what it is."

Lintence was still lying down, not at all a posture for listening to others, so Alsheyra grabbed the clothes covering his chest, unconsciously making him stand. Though Lintence's expression was displeased, he didn't oppose being moved by her.

"Wasn't I born in order to oppose this fate?"

"......Seems so."

"In order for the body of the Military Arts ancestor to reappear, the people in the first city endlessly merged the blood of strong Military Artists. They removed impurities, filtering things out and resulting in the being that is me, so I'm obviously a strong Military Artist. But I'm so strong that I can't enter battle. Once I get serious, I'll end up destroying the city before killing the filth monsters, how miserable."

The meaning Alsheyra wanted to express wasn't communicated to the other party, and Lintence only distorted his face in a surprised expression.

"However, in the battlefield before, I realized I can be useful for the upcoming situation. As long as I use the right method, I can fight in a situation where I won't destroy the city, and I know what I can do."

"Hm."

"You understand? I have been created for one purpose. I'm not dissatisfied with that, and I also believe that's how the world works. Even if I'm only one Military Artist, I have to fight with filth monsters, because that's the extent of the burden I carry. So, I don't have any problem with my life being the final weapon."

"I understand..... then, what exactly do you want to say?"

"You still don't understand?"

"Who would, isn't it just something you're thinking inside your heart?"

"Hmm? Ah, yeah, that's right. Then I'll tell you, do you want to hear?"

"If I said I didn't, this conversation couldn't continue, right?"

"Then, what if I said.....I won't tell you?"

"Enough, just say it."

Seeing Lintence's impatient attitude, Alsheyra was quite satisfied.

So, she decided to tell it to him without further ado.

"Once this battlefield ends, I will have lost the meaning of my life."

"What do you mean?"

"Isn't that how things are? Because I was born for a single purpose, which was to fight on that battlefield. If the fight ends, then I'll no longer be useful. How surprising, is the truth really that surprising?"

"......Are you seriously saying that?"

"Huh? What, could it be that you already knew? What a liar, Lin's brain can't be that good, right?"

Alsheyra was truly surprised.

She had lived to now for that battlefield. In order to reach her goal, she grew up without hesitation, fighting to be able to extend her life. The feeling of her great strength, already enough to be eligible for a Heaven's Blade, gradually increasing made her feel the moment coming.

Though she still was anxious about having not completely reproduced the ancestors' body, in terms of fighting power, her strength was already full to a degree where she couldn't hope for it to increase further.

However, before the fight with Durindana, Leerin had appeared . Leerin only had the body of a normal person, but was still

involved in this fate. This was not only sad, but also made Alsheyra feel partially angry. However, Alsheyra also felt excited that the moment where she could finally exert all of her ability was gradually approaching.

At the same time, she felt lonely.

She had never understood the meaning of this loneliness.

"I had thought that I would even become tense, but I never would have thought there would be nothing of the sort. I feel lonely because of my task being finished. I wouldn't have thought that I would be a bit reluctant to carry out my mission. Don't you think that's very surprising?"

"Were you scared?"

"Of course not!"

Her having this kind of emotion was far too funny, and Alsheyra almost laughed herself to death.

She didn't laugh because she was sorrowful or ashamed, only because she single-mindedly thought that this was ridiculous enough to laugh at. She wasn't able to calmly step back and analyze her current emotions.

"The person who has alll~ways been on top posing will come down, and then things will end. Once I think that after things end I

won't have to use Military Arts, I inexplicably feel happy or mirthful, and my emotions also become excited. Ahh, I don't know what I should do."

Alsheyra thought that Lintence would feel surprised at her endless laughter, but never thought that he would put away his surprised expression and look at her seriously.

"......What is it?"

Though her body itched after her laughter ended, Alsheyra opened her mouth to ask that because of Lintence's response.

"Do you hate not being able to do anything that much?"

"Nn- how should I describe it? I'm not too sure."

"I didn't know your feelings would come to such a conclusion about the result, but answer something for me."

"What is it?"

"If both of us survive, fight with me."

"Ah- that might not be bad, okay."

"The loser has to listen to the winner, how about we add that rule?"

"Of course! Though, to think that you would say such a thing."

"Then it's decided."

"Hmmm? Then before then, I should properly think about what kind of punishment game I should make you do."

Alsheyra felt that Lintence had used this method to interrupt her topic, but she had just recently thought of fighting with Lintence, so she openly received this proposal.

"It won't end in an instant this time?"

"Of course."

The two smiled at each other. Alsheyra's heart was floating. She didn't think she would lose, but she wondered about what thoughts were in Lintence's mind.

The strange loneliness that she had just felt had been dispersed.

"......So, why are you looking for me, Kanaris?"

Her mood was obviously this good, but a presence bringing an annoying premonition stood behind her.

"......Your Majesty."

"I should warn you beforehand, don't meddle in the problem this time, okay?"

Kanaris had the blood of the Three Royal Families, and the royal guards were also composed of members of the Rivanes family that was close to the royal families.

"I understand."

Kanaris replied this way, but her face had a bitter expression.

After announcing Leerin's royal inheritance, the hostility of the outside relatives of the Three Royal Families began to focus. At the time, Alsheyra had first advised Kanaris as well as the three uninvolved Heaven's Blade successors that she had asked to act as Leerin's guards, telling them not to meddle in things.

"This is my family matter. I remember that I said before, though I have put you by my side, I don't know if I can trust you completely. If you become my enemies, even I might not be able to forgive you, right?"

Before mentioning other Heaven's Blades, Kanaris' loyalty to the throne was undoubtable. However, if a blood relative or brother became involved in this problem, it was unknown how the situation would play out.

If it were someone like Minse who attempted to assassinate Alsheyra [7], she could laugh it off, but if it were a conspiracy against Leerin, that was another matter.

Kanaris lowered her head, unable to bear Alsheyra's gaze.

"I'm very sorry, but Your Majesty....."

"......What is it?"

Kanaris' attitude made her worry.

"What did you do?"

The one who said this was Lintence.

"Lin.....?"

"The contact with the steel threads extending to the mansion has disappeared."

"Huh?"

"They weren't cut, they disappeared. What did you do, Kanaris?
"

"....."

Kanaris stayed quiet.

".....Disappeared?"

Lintence said that the steel threads hadn't been cut. In other words, the steel threads extending to the mansion couldn't relay any information.

"Lintence's steel threads lost their function?"

Were there Military Artists who could do such a thing? If it were some special power that didn't have any direct relationship with fighting power, then it could have passed under Alsheyra's spies.

However, was that really the truth?

If it were like that, how could Alsheyra explain what she felt?

Alsheyra obviously focused her consciousness on the Eutnohl residence, but hadn't caught the presence of anyone, why was that ?

Not only the guards, she couldn't even feel the presences of Leerin and the others.

No, it wasn't only that.

She couldn't even sense any presences from the nearby area either.

"......Kanaris?"

Facing Alsheyra's questioning, Kanaris remained silent. She calmed her breathing, enduring the pressure that Alsheyra gave off, while maintaining her silence.

No, that wasn't right.

"Normal Military Artists can't do something like this. Kanaris, what's going on?"

She had to quickly go to the residence - that was what her mind thought. The current time wasn't one for talking with Kanaris, she had to immediately go to that place to confirm whether Leerin was safe.....

Alsheyra obviously thought this way, but her feet didn't move.

"....."

Lintence who stood nearby was the same.

"Please forgive me, I could do nothing, no one could resist it."

Kanaris endured Alsheyra and Lintence's gazes, while saying this with a pained voice. The attitude that she expressed showed that the situation hadn't been her own actions.

"Leerin!"

Alsheyra felt sticky sweat from her entire body, moving her gaze from Kanaris who was blankly standing still, loudly shouting out Leerin's name.

The room seemed to have settled down, and Leerin let out a breath .

Leerin understood the Queen's reasons for worrying, as she would periodically come to visit her, but the way she did so really had problems. Sneaking into the room while concealing it from others wasn't okay.

"......Before when I wanted to sleep, I would notice her already lying on the bed."

Leerin muttered while tidying up the things on the table. Right now it was already past the time for studying, and she also didn't have the mood for it. Tomorrow she would have to attend class, so it was about time to sleep.

"Um....."

That voice made Leerin turn her head, and standing in front of her was Eldein, who didn't know what to do.

"It's already very late, why don't you go sleep."

"Ah, yes. I understand."

Minse had already returned to his room, and only Leerin and Eldein were left in the room. Eldein had originally started working as a guard monitoring the room from outside, but when he had become closer to Leerin, he had started working as Leerin's bodyguard like now.

"Then, I'll be in the next room on standby as usual."

"Sorry to bother..... Ah, right."

Just as Leerin was seeing Eldein out of the room, she thought of something.

"Is there something?"

"The stuff back then, was only because Her Majesty likes teasing people, you don't need to be too serious about it."

"Ah, the attendant thing....."

"Right right."

Leerin nodded her head.

"Though there are truly Military Artists charged with protecting the palace, they're almost all from the Rivanes family..... Though it's not too good to speak this way, I don't think it's an easy position, so you don't need to take the initiative to work in that kind of place."

Eldein was a Military Artist that Minse had picked to act as Leerin's guard, and though he normally looked a bit dull, he was definitely a strong Military Artist.

Leerin thought that way, but.....

"That....."

Eldein who had stayed silent listening to Leerin speak, interrupted with an extremely troubled expression:

"Am I a cause for worry staying by Your Highness' side?"

"......Huh?"

The unexpected question made Leerin look at Eldein in surprise .

"......Ah! No, I wouldn't feel very annoyed or anything like that, but....."

"If I won't make Your Highness worry by staying, would you please allow me to serve as your attendant."

"But....."

Even if he were a normal Military Artists, she knew it would be an easy job.

Leerin who had grown up as a normal citizen knew that when the citizens on the streets criticized the palace, they always would first bare their blades at the Military Artists guarding the palace.

They were the useless weaklings that protected the strongest Queen, who wouldn't ever receive injury.

"I know what everyone calls the palace guards."

"Then....."

"But, to protect Your Highness, with only that reason, it doesn't matter whether it's a palace guard or an attendant, I'll do it!"

"Eldein....."

The simple eyes that looked downward held Leerin's reflected figure.

She felt pained.

Because she noticed something that she wasn't willing to perceive.

No, she always knew. Though it was only a faint feeling, she understood what Eldein was thinking.

However.....

"Eldein....."

At that time, what exactly did Leerin say? She poked at the fog in her heart, preparing to weave her words.

However, the sentence disappeared ambiguously.

".....What?"

She understood the atmosphere wasn't the same.

".....Your Highness?"

Leerin's change made Eldein show a surprised expression.

The change in the room was clearly obvious, but Eldein totally didn't feel it. Then, did that mean this wasn't caused by a Military Artist?

"Wu....."

The right eye under her blindfold began to hurt.

"Your Highness, what's wrong?"

The atmosphere was very quiet. But, something was happening.

Moreover, this something began with a form that Eldein also understood.

An explosion suddenly sounded from the other side of the window.

"Enemy attack?"

Eldein pulled out his Dite and assumed a stance. The light from the Dite restoration would leave the window through the gap, and in order to not let their enemy know their position, Eldein didn't immediately restore his Dite.

"It can't be, but it's unexpectedly so bright....."

The sounds of battle still continued. Eldein took a tablet-like object from his pocket, a Psychokinesis flake.

However, regardless of how Eldein stared at it, the flake didn't shine with the light of Psychokinesis received from its Psychokinesist.

"Communication has been cut."

After informing her of this, Eldein went near the windows to confirm the situation outside. Though the sounds of battle still continued, every time a noise rang out, the entire room would shake slightly, making them feel that the situation was gradually worsening.

"Damn!"

Eldein seemed to have the same feeling.

"Your Highness, please wait here, I will go confirm an evacuation route."

The other Military Artist guards hadn't come by. The sounds of battle drew closer step by step with an unhurried speed, as if knowing that this side would be in a panic and ridiculing that.

"Wait, Eldein."

"......Don't worry, I will definitely protect Your Highness."

The restless Eldein prepared to move. Leerin tried to stop him, but he didn't stop his pace.

"Wait!"

He left as Leerin called out, rushing out of the room.

"Eldein."

The figure that had disappeared from her vision left its afterimage in her left eye..... That kind of feeling wouldn't disappear. Moreover this afterimage refused to disappear as if it were a premonition.

"Why would you say that kind of thing?"

Her voice trembled.

Leerin had indeed accepted Eldein. Though she hadn't accepted him as a man, she still felt that she was very comfortable with him. Even if Eldein stayed by her, Leerin wouldn't feel uncomfortable, and could relax herself. Leerin had been crowned as a Eutnohl, and had become a member of the Three Royal Families. He was a temporary haven during this kind of intense change in her life environment.

He was like that, and had said such a thing.

"Isn't it impossible to get wrong that way?"

Leerin couldn't receive Eldein's words the wrong way.

Because, she had once spoken like that on her path.

"......It would be nice if I could have also been that slow."

Those kinds of words wouldn't work.

If they did work, wouldn't the person here not be Eldein, but Layfon instead?

"......What am I saying?"

This wasn't the problem. The outcome Leerin chose was the current situation.

Leerin was the one who didn't need Layfon.

"Eldein has already....."

His words went through her chest, staying there. Leerin obviously wanted to keep her heart from desiring others, and his words were filled with his feelings of giving up, strong enough to make one feel pained.

The feelings mixed inside slowly seeped into her heart.

The warm feelings of his attempt to give up felt tender, making her feel sad.

"Being so leisurely, is that because you aren't yet aware of things?"

"Huh?"

The voice that suddenly entered her ears made Leerin turn her head.

But, there was no one behind her.

"Was I too sensitive?"

There were no presences of anyone here.

The sounds of battle had become quieter. Had the battle ended, or was it entering a stalemate?

If it had already ended, which side had won?

"Are the people in the building okay?"

Just as she murmured this.....

The door flew open, and the walls were destroyed.

A deep and intense sound rang out as the walls and things in the room scattered.

Afterwards, an extremely large object fell by Leerin's feet.

"Eldein!"

"......Ugh!"

He fell on the ground, and his surroundings were gradually dyed in a red circle. His right arm was broken, and fresh blood continuously flowed out. His forehead had also been split, and the blood that seeped out of the wound gradually turned his face crimson.

"Get a hold of yourself!"

Leerin took out her handkerchief to wipe the wound on Eldein's forehead, and looked around for something to tie the wound on his right arm.

"Your Highness, please escape....."

Eldein had received a deep wound, but the wound wouldn't cause him to die quickly.

In the end he should be all right. Leerin relaxed her breath. At that moment, a man walked into the room from the big hole in the wall.

That man was probably about forty years old, very tall, with a large build. If thick hair and a wild nature were added on to Minse's body, he would turn into approximately that kind of man.

In other words, this man was very similar to Minse. Having grown to resemble him meant that this man had the blood of a royal family.

"We haven't seen each other since the first time you made a public appearance at the banquet, Your Highness."

The man who stepped into the room with a leisurely pace stared at Leerin with undisguised contempt.

"You are..... Terios?"

Leerin remembered that this name had arisen in a topic before.

"I wouldn't have thought that you unexpectedly remembered me. It's truly an honor, Your Highness."

Though the man's way of speaking was extremely respectful, his attitude towards Leerin was full of contempt.

"Please escape. Terios-sama, he, is a bit strange..... the tight guard, he could unexpectedly single-handedly-" Eldein painfully spoke. Just then, his expression suddenly changed drastically.

"Guh!"

"Eldein!"

After spitting a large amount of blood from his mouth, Eldein lost consciousness, falling to the ground unmoving.

"It seems like his organs suffered damage. If he isn't treated quickly, his life might be in danger."

"You....."

Eldein had just said he was alone.

"Do you want to kill me?"

"Correct."

Facing Leerin's question, Terios almost unhesitantly nodded his head.

"Her Majesty is the strongest Military Artist in history, and we have become accustomed to her wayward behavior. But, just because we have decided that it doesn't mean she can do whatever she wants."

".....Does it displease you that much that I am a successor to the throne?"

"Did you truly grow up in Grendan?"

The opponent said this with an unexpected expression.

"In this battle-filled city, if the ruler doesn't stand on top of the Military Artists, then what should be done? The ruler must be a

Military Artist. Other than those who can become everyone's shield, other than a leader who can stand in front of anyone, who else can lead Grendan?"

Terios said this in respectful words, but with a scornful tone. His purpose for asking this was to let Leerin say the obvious answer.

Terios felt that the obvious answer was the answer useful to him.

However, Leerin didn't think that it was so obvious.

"......If you think like that, does it mean that you want the throne of this city?"

"No, I don't. But, as long as you die, the throne will be given to the one most deserving of it."

"......No, you already want the throne."

After confirming that the unconscious Eldein was breathing, Leerin stood up.

"After acquiring that kind of strength, you begin to be unable to constrain your ambitions."

To be able to single-handedly deal with the guards protecting the mansion, and in such a short time.

Regardless of how strong a Military Artist he was, he couldn't have done this.

As long as he didn't have the power of a Heaven's Blade successor.

"What did you do for this strength?"

"......Ha, haha. You really dare to talk, little girl."

After being criticized by Leerin, Terios laughed.

He dropped his polite facade, in fact an extremely rude mask, showing his unruly true face.

"It's true. If I kill you, the Rivanes elders will push me forwards as the next successor to the throne. Thanks to Claribel leaving home like an idiot, I was able to become the head of the Ronsmier family, and then the next successor to Grendan's throne."

"Is that position so fascinating?"

"Isn't that normal?"

Ahh, it was as expected. Leerin saw Terios' greedy face and understood the entire situation. Minse who was her uncle was that kind of person, and had thought like that once before.

But, if it were like this, it conflicted with the thing Alsheyra and the others worried about.

Such a life-threatening crisis shouldn't have appeared in front of Leerin.

So, she feared the situation was like this.

Terios, and other people related to the royal family, knew nothing at all, other than a very small number of people. They didn't know what kind of being Grendan was, and didn't know the function of the Three Royal Families, nor did they know what waited ahead.

So by now, there were still people who would cause unrest with this kind of greedy expression.

Then, someone had utilized this.

"Who gave you that power?"

"What are you saying? This power is one I gained myself."

"....."

"What? What are you looking at?"

Terios showed a doubtful expression as if he knew nothing.

"......You didn't see Her Majesty and Lintence here, did you?"

"Are you bluffing? Even if you're a successor to the throne, you couldn't have Heaven's Blades acting as your guards. More importantly, why would Her Majesty visit here?"

He hadn't noticed.

"You should withdraw, you're being used. If you stay your hand early, I can still act as if this commotion didn't happen."

"......What is this, a plea for mercy?"

"Perhaps you really have this kind of ambition. But, this situation is the outcome of you being used by someone. I think it's best if you calm down and leave."

"You're only a normal person, and you can do nothing in this situation. But, I really can't stand your attitude. Is this the attitude of someone who was named as the successor to the throne?"

It seemed that Leerin's manner of response had only made Terios feel displeased.

"Enough..... go die."

Terios raised a hand. Light gathered at his fingertip, and killing intent congregated in front of Leerin's forehead.

"If you want to hate something, hate the fate that Her Majesty gave you."

Apparently this was Terios' style of giving comforting words to those who would die.

The Kei that had gathered at his fingertip shot out.

Terios was completely convinced, and had no doubts.

Leerin's skull would shatter, becoming a miserable corpse.

This would serve as a warning to the Queen, and would let her understand the significance of Grendan's throne.

The throne was to be given to a Military Artist. He had to correct Alsheyra's folly of trying to let a normal person sit on the throne, and show the correct way to the people.

The one who would show this was himself.

The next King would be himself.

"......Do you think you can live longer than I or Her Majesty?"

The sight of a man who was intoxicated with his reasons was disgusting. Leerin thought this in her heart while shattering the other party's fantasy.

The Kei that Terios shot out burst without even a sound before Leerin's eyes.

"Wha-!"

Terios was very surprised.

Leerin who he thought was only a normal person had unexpectedly blocked the Kei burst, so he obviously would be surprised.

"What did you do!?"

Terios shouted while backing away quickly. He passed through the big hole that he had broken, arriving in the corridor. Though he felt that the person standing in front of him was a normal person, he still immediately took action to respond to this inexplicable situation.

"I remember that Eldein praised you. You should be a good Military Artist, as he said."

Was it Leerin becoming a successor to the throne that had made Terios feel angry, and then perceive his own ambitions?

"You... aren't a normal person?"

"......No, I'm only a normal person, nothing more."

"I won't be tricked by you again. ......Ah, Alsheyra. By now, is she planning to net the dangerous elements within the royal families?"

"......What are you saying?"

"No, I understand. You aren't Herder's illegitimate child, but a fake that Alsheyra prepared. Making the fake the successor to the throne, to uncover the potential opposition to Alsheyra in the royal families, that's her ruse."

Leerin silently shook her head.

This person wasn't living in reality.

He was a person living in his desired dreamscape of seizing the throne. Had he become this way after Leerin became a successor to the Throne, or had he become like this after obtaining that strength ? Regardless, the person standing in front of Leerin was living in a dream.

".....No, The one not living in reality is myself."

If he didn't know the truth, then the situation surrounding Leerin and the others should be even further from reality.

But, in Grendan, the situation surrounding Leerin and the others was reality, and Terios' thoughts were but a fantasy.

"Hahahaha. Yes, that's how it is, I've been set up, huh, Alsheyra! "

Terios laughed loudly, howling, Kei spilling from his body.

"I don't have time to fantasize with you."

"No, you must stay, stay till the end!"

Terios restored his Dite. It was a poleaxe with a long handle.

Just raising it up high produced a strong wind raging through the room.

Eldein who was fallen by her feet was gradually pushed away by the wind, but Leerin stood still without moving at all, only her hair being blown by the wind.

"Before this power, even the Queen cannot face me."

"As expected, you're not looking at reality."

Terios closed the distance, sweeping the raised poleaxe horizontally. It was a poleaxe that could easily tear through Leerin's body.

Leerin's left hand moved. Before the high-speed movement that Terios produced, the movement of her hand seemed far too slow.

However, that hand moved as Leerin was just about to be cut in two, and with a shockwave she crushed the top of the poleaxe blade, blocking it.

"Wha-!"

The shockwave burst out before Leerin's eyes, but Eldein had already been pushed behind her by the wind, and did not suffer the shockwave.

"You..... How!"

"You're already useless."

Leefin poured strength into her left hand that was suppressing the poleaxe.

With that, everything ended.

Cracks appeared in the poleaxe. The cracks widened in an instant, spreading to the haft of the poleaxe. However, they did not stop there, continuing to break through Terios' arm.

"Kuh, uwah, what is this!"

"....."

"You! What's going on, what..... is this?"

"Just returning your move."

Deliberately speaking these words with a cold tone, Leerin added the last push.

"Guah!"

Yelling out, Terios was already using all his strength.

After adding a final push, the advancing of the cracks sped up, and in an instant covered Terios' entire body.

Light shone from under the cracks. The flowing Kei that circulated through the poleaxe and Terios' body could be seen from under the cracks.

"Disappear."

Leerin proclaimed.

Light overflowed from Terios' body.

The spilling light covered the entire room, blocking the entire field of vision.

"....."

Afterwards, as the light dispersed, the figure of Terios fallen in the corridor appeared. His appearance collapsed on the floor with his right arm bent and broken was similar to that of Eldein, who was fallen beside Leerin.

A strong Kei flow suddenly emanated from the residence.

"! Who is it?"

Though she wanted to get closer to the residence, her feet wouldn't move. She wanted to use her senses, but she couldn't feel anything. Just then, the presence of a strong Kei suddenly came from that place. Alsheyra and Lintence were taken aback, and then felt incomparably surprised.

".....I have no impressions of this Kei."

Lintence murmured.

The Kei was so great that the opponent was on the level of a Heaven's Blade.

But, if it were a Heaven's Blade successor, the two would obviously remember all of their Kei presences, so it had to be someone other than a Heaven's Blade successor. However, the Queen and the Heaven's Blades couldn't not know of such a person.

"What's going on, how unsettling."

It wasn't only this intriguing situation that made him feel unsettled. Rather than a strange sense of a mysterious situation that was completely incomprehensible, the impatience of obviously knowing but being unable to understand was stronger.

Therefore, this situation shouldn't have been caused only by the people in the Rivanes family taking action to assassinate Leerin.

But in that case, they couldn't explain that Kei.

No, perhaps they could explain it.

"Could it be....."

Not only this situation, but also the Kei flow, gave them the impatient feeling of knowing but being unable to understand.

Then, shouldn't Alsheyra be able to recognize this Kei?

"But, how could....."

A speculation floated in her mind. However, Alsheyra couldn't confirm that speculation.

".....Kanaris, what's going on?"

Alsheyra didn't want to look at the answer that had appeared in her mind, so she turned to ask Kanaris.

"I cannot say, I can't....."

Kanaris shook her head bitterly. This kind of response didn't look like it had been produced from her feelings or relations with the Rivanes family.

Alsheyra couldn't miss that.

Therefore, the truth was as Alsheyra had thought.

"Hey....."

Lintence's voice interrupted her tense emotions.

"If you thought of something, tell us, I'm also beginning to feel bad about this situation."

"Lin....."

"Everyone moving here and there secretly, where do they think the battlefield will be in the end? What do they think their fangs exist for? Isn't it solved if we just completely crush all of the useless bugs crawling around being hindrances?"

"The situation isn't that simple."

Lintence had come to Grendan to look for battles. It would be tough to explain the things that happened here to him.

"Is it to win against fate? Then what? I don't have the slightest interest in the victory they have prepared. A battle that can't be won and a battle destined to be won have completely different meanings."

"That's true, but....."

But, this was a battle they couldn't lose. What was bet on this battlefield was not only the lives of the fighters, nor only the fates of the citizens that the Military Artists always were burdened by on the battlefield.

It was the world, all of the Regios of the world.

All of the people who lived in them.

These lives had all been bet on the upcoming war.

".....Are you someone who would bet your life for a stranger?"

"Saying that is going a bit far. But, I don't care about those strangers, but I want to protect the people living here, so I naturally just..... that's how things are, right?"

She had diverged. Though her heart thought so, Alsheyra didn't pull the topic back.

Because to Lintence, this was a topic that he couldn't help but ask.

"Right. In terms of the results, we're only protecting the world. Queen, what I cannot allow is the people who put the ones who will do these things to one side, and obstinately give these kinds of missions to others, creating these kinds of fates."

"....."

Lintence had also perceived something, so he had said something like this.

Was the situation really like that?

If even Lintence had that kind of feeling, then the situation really was like that.

The person who gave off that Kei was only an individual.

That was definitely not the energy given off by an assassin.

"......In the end, we're only people who can't arrive at the end."

Kanaris murmured this. It wasn't meant for anyone in particular , only talking to herself, a lament aimed at her own powerless feeling.

"The power that Military Artists possess isn't that important in the end. Compared to the being that must truly guide, they're just beings that can be replaced anytime. Before that, destructive power is only a strength of that degree. The true importance is

hidden within the factor of Military Artists, and then that important person also....."

Leerin.

What was she currently looking at in that residence?

In the room that had returned to calmness, Leerin gazed at her own hand.

She was shaking.

It was after the recent battle. She was bathed in her own killing intent.

Also, her own hand had taken a life.

The oncoming event that she wasn't used to made Leerin's heart grow cold, and struck fear into her heart.

"From this kind of thing, how can I....."

She tightly gripped her shaking hand, squeezing this sentence out word by word. On this road, there were more terrifying things waiting for her, and she definitely couldn't get scared by them.

"Nn - If I could, I would want to see that performance again."

"......Who are you?"

The female voice sounded again. Leerin held back her feelings of wanting to check whether Eldein was safe, looking for the owner of that voice.

But, as expected, there were no human presences to be found in the room.

"I'm an insider."

"Huh?"

The voice came from close by, and Leerin looked over there.

Unwittingly, on the table in front of the sofa was a cat.

After meeting Leerin's gaze, the cat tamely meowed.

It was a black cat, with a body of splendid fur and clear blue eyes. His forehead was inlaid with a blue sapphire, looking as if it had three eyes.

In the area surrounding the sapphire grew white fur. Had it received some serious injury?

"......It couldn't be."

Leerin had no recollections of this cat. It wasn't this room's pet, and Leerin had never heard of any people nearby raising this kind of cat.

This cat had appeared here in this juncture, meaning.....

"Correct, I am the cat in front of you."

".....You, what are you in the first place?"

The voice wasn't from the cat's mouth, but came from a different place. However, what was making the sound could only be the cat.

".....That is Erumi Rigzario."

A new sound came across.

But, this was a voice that she knew.

"Saya?"

The black-clothed maiden lightly walked in from the big hole in the wall.

"Aah, it's been a long time. Is it okay for you not to be sleeping?"

"Since what has befallen this place, I haven't even entered sleep once."

"Ah, that crisis-sensing ability."

"Saya.....?"

The black-clothed maiden and the cat. Leerin looked back and forth between them.

"For the most part, this is a companion."

"Ahahah, you understand, huh."

Saya's introduction made the cat make laughing sounds.

"But, I'm truly your comrade. I have no reason to be your enemy, and more importantly, the amount of time I fought with her is far longer than yours." [8]

"She is with the moon and I..... also one of the people that Airen picked up from the old world, someone who also developed the Regios."

"Meaning....."

The first time she had met Saya, she had once told the truth to her.

"Right, Rigzario."

Leerin thought of it. In the words that Saya had spoken to her, this name had appeared.

"The one who created Subspace..... this world."

"Correct."

Only her voice was definite. The cat was still like a cat, moving from the table to the sofa and curling up into a ball. The situation of the appearance not matching the language would make an onlooker feel dizzy.

"......Also the person who created the problem."

"Saying it like that is okay too."

If that person hadn't created the Subspace machine, the situation wouldn't have turned into this.

"But, if I didn't create it, what would the situation have become? What is for sure is that Leerin Eutnohl or Leerin Marfes wouldn't exist. Moreover this world couldn't exist, and obviously the environment you grew up in wouldn't exist. Do you know of reincarnation? Roughly speaking, the meaning is that your soul endlessly circulates, becoming various different forms. But even so , you can't say for sure that your consciousness would be Leerin. In other words, you wouldn't be yourself."

"....."

"It's because I created the Subspace machine that you are here, so it's no use to complain."

"Perhaps that's true, but that's not something you should say!"

It was like a murderer saying, 'Even if I didn't touch him he'd die of old age', Leerin felt that it was very unfair, and couldn't suppress her anger.

"Enough is enough, please."

Leerin took a step towards the cat, and Saya stopped her with this sentence.

Though it was a flat tone without any feeling, it bore enough strength to stop Leerin.

"Even if you can't stop this from happening, you don't have any good reason to expect this person to pay the price that we wish. So, I won't allow you to continue insulting Leerin."

"Saya....."

The black-clothed maiden's expression still didn't change, though her words almost oozed tears.

"I know, my mistake."

The almost completely insincere apology made a complicated expression appear on Leerin's face that she couldn't completely calm down.

".....Ah, let's leave it at that. My genuine thoughts and your feelings will be never-intersecting parallel lines however long we speak."

"Then, what is really going on?"

Saya asked this in place of Leerin who didn't want to open her mouth to talk.

"It's a test, did you know?"

The cat was curled up on the sofa, and only the cold emotionless voice resounded in the room.

"With what objective?"

"The performance testing of this child, Airen's eye. This is something even I can't copy. The only way it can be done is to try collecting the pieces of him that were spread around this world."

"That....."

Leerin held down her eyepatch.

"Airen's enchantment of the moon will be broken sooner or later . We need to face Ignasis and the Nano-Celluloids that will escape from there, and relying only on pure force is almost meaningless. We will need a different kind of power."

Everything Erumi said was what the Three Royal Families of Grendan had done up through now.

"You gave that mission to Grendan?"

"This is the first city that I created, and when I created it, I planned to have it act as the last stronghold. When confronting battle, no one would only make armor and not weapons, right?"

"But, Her Majesty....."

The effort of the Three Royal Families of Grendan had almost bloomed in the form of Alsheyra. But, there should have been another factor added, but in some incidental situation it had arrived in Leerin's body.

The situation should have only been like that.

"Haven't you known it wasn't like that for a while?"

"....."

"Do you know what you've done?"

"....."

This kind of tone meant that Erumi knew everything. She knew of Leerin's life so far, and knew of things that Leerin hadn't observed at the time.

"In the battle with Durindana, what did you do for your adoptive father? When you were just a baby, what did you do for the unrelated orphan next to you?"

"Shut up!"

Erumi's words made Leerin block her ears and yell out.

A thorn inside her adoptive father's body had grown into bramble spreading throughout him, and in the end had become Kei strength.

She had given Layfon strength like this before. She hadn't deliberately done so. But, for an immature child to escape a predicament, she had given the strength of a protector to the person next to her.

Leerin could bestow this power upon them.

This kind of ability had no reason to be unusable on herself.

That was the true nature of the battle just now.

Erumi wasn't willing to look at Leerin's wailing. No, she had seen, yet didn't have the slightest sympathy.

She didn't stop speaking.

"Never mind your tragedy for now. The situation just now can confirm that the power of the moon has appeared in your body."

"......Kuh!"

The pain in her heart made her want to roll on the ground. Erumi's words were that cruel, completely ignoring the other party's feelings.

"Erumi."

Saya quietly drew closer to Leerin.

But, her eyes looked at the black cat on the sofa.

"What happened to your heart?"

"That, it's already broken, or perhaps it didn't exist in the first place..... maybe it had already been lost back then? Maybe that's closer to the truth."

Quietly replying to Saya's question, the cat continued speaking:

"Your ability has already been confirmed. Then, everything is ready for my final battle plan."

The cat suddenly raised its face and stood up. It seemed as if it had noticed something in the vicinity, but didn't leave the sofa.

The cat's actions and Erumi's words weren't associated, as expected.

".....Though actually it should already be too late."

"Huh?"

The sudden words felt somehow unbelievable.

"You've also seen it, right? That's why you're awake."

Those words weren't directed towards herself. Leerin looked at Saya.

"Nn, it was mixed with Durindana, and succeeded in entering this world."

Saya also nodded her head.

"......It?"

"Nano-Celluloid Interface 1 Lævateinn. She was created even earlier than Durindana, the prototype of the Nano-Celluloids, and their ultimate ancestor."

"How....."

She hadn't thought that it would unexpectedly have already arrived.

"How can we....."

Leerin had finally made clear, with difficulty, what kind of strength she had. However, with her recent shaking and thinking of the battle with Durindana, she truly wasn't confident that she could completely do what she had to in such an intense battle.

"Don't worry, we shouldn't have problems for the time being."

Leerin had lost the color in her face, but Erumi's following words surprised her again.

"......What does that mean?"

"I also wish to know."

"Ah? Saya doesn't know either?"

"Because I don't have that kind of function."

"Yes, that's true. Then I'll show the image."

Erumi had just spoken, when.....

"Wow....."

A black mist suddenly appeared in the center of the room.

Just as Leerin wondered about it, the black mist gave off light, solidifying into an image.

"This is....."

What was reflected there was a moving city seen in the wilderness. The sun rose from the other end of the image as the darkness was erased from the sky. The city was taking steps, moving through this background.

Grendan should currently have just entered nighttime.

However, the city in the scene was already early in the morning.

"Though there's a slight delay, this image is in real time."

"Delay?"

"If I said the world was round, you wouldn't trust me, right? Just listen."

Erumi's words made Leerin displeased, but the city interested her more, so she carefully examined the city.

Leerin had once sat on a roaming bus and seen the exteriors of many cities, so she knew that even just from looking at the outside, every city had its own characteristics.

Then.....

"Huh? No way."

She trusted her memories.

Her feeling when she first saw this scene was far too strong, and even if the angle was different, she could recognize this city at first glance.

More importantly, the tower raised high in the center with a clock affixed on top of it was hard to mistake.

"How..... it's Zuellni."

"Correct. The Academy City Zuellni, Lævateinn's location."

"Impossible!"

Leerin involuntarily yelled:

"Layfon, he..... is there..... why, why....."

Why was it like this?

"In order to keep him from being involved... I thought this would let him stay outside of things, so I....."

Only because she had thought like this had she pushed Layfon away.

"It came to this because he's very strong, so it's all my fault. So, I don't want him to fight again, I don't want him to be hurt....."

It was only because she thought this way that she had pushed Layfon away.

"But, why is this! Why!"

"Please keep calm, it's unseemly."

"Don't tell me what to do!"

"Don’t worry, she hasn't gone there to destroy."

".....Huh?"

Erumi's words made Leerin suddenly calm down.

"Look at this."

After Erumi said this, the image changed to a different scene. The scene slowly closed in to the city, slowly focusing from a district, to a building, and then to a single room.

"This is Lævateinn."

Next, the image showed the figure of a single girl.

She was about the same age as Leerin. Though her expression was a bit flat, she was quite a beautiful girl.

"......Huh?"

Perhaps she was preparing to leave in the morning, as the girl who seemed to have just changed into her uniform hung a bag over her shoulder and walked towards the entrance.

"No way, she....."

Because Durindana from before was obviously a gigantic creature.

"To her, form doesn't have much meaning in the first place. In order to control the half-crazed Nano-Celluloids in the Zero Territory on the other side, they all take such giant forms. But humans definitely can't take that kind of form. That's the situation. "

Erumi continued explaining:

"Though it's only a hypothesis, I think that Lævateinn could be growing stronger there. If she can integrate with all of the Nano-Celluloids in a scattered state that are produced, she might have already gathered all of the information in the world."

"How....."

It was hard to believe.

Regardless of if this girl and Durindana were similar beings.

But Erumi said she had already gathered all of the information in the world.

It was something hard to believe, like a joke.

However, the truth wasn't a joke.

In the image, the girl who walked towards the entrance stopped her feet. She didn't seem like she had forgotten to bring something. Leerin thought that the girl was only suddenly stopping, but she simply stayed stationary without moving. That kind of situation couldn't happen during the tight morning time.

Then, the girl abruptly turned her head.

She didn't turn to behind her.

She turned to Leerin who was watching the image.

"She shouldn't be able to see the image here, because I'm using Nano-Celluloids like her."

"But....."

She was looking over here.

If the girl hadn't noticed the gazes from here, then she would have been looking near the edge of the room's wall and ceiling.

In the time-tight morning, what reason did she have to look there?

Leerin couldn't think of one.

The girl moved.

"Ah....."

The abnormal situation of the expressionless girl meeting her eyes through the image made Leerin freeze in place.

.....However, the girl's action freed her from doubt.

If the girl had simply returned her gaze to the entrance and left for school, perhaps Leerin would have thought the situation just now was only her overthinking. However.....

The girl gazed at Leerin, and moved her mouth.

The image didn't convey sound.

But, her mouth movements weren't fast, and the sentence was very short, so the meaning the girl wanted to express couldn't be mistaken.

Don't get in the way.

The girl, Lævateinn, said this.

This sentence was said to Leerin through the image, and she feared that the girl also knew Saya and Erumi were there.

"Hah....."

The cat made noise. Though it was only a sigh, a glimpse of fatigue could be sensed from the seriousness it held.

"I barely managed to block her from destroying our Nano-Celluloids."

"As expected, did she deliberately not come here?"

"It seems like it. Ah, I probably could have guessed."

Saya and Erumi spoke, and Leerin could only stand to the side blankly staring at the broken image.

"That's Lævateinn.....?"

Even the black mist that had showed the scene had already disappeared, and only the presence of the brutally ravaged room was left behind.

But, that image had indeed just been shown.

She was in Zuellni with the form of a girl.

"Why.....?"

In Zuellni?

Not only this. The reason why Lævateinn was in Zuellni was the one question, but why would she take the form of a normal person to live the life of a student?

"Why? Weren't the goals of those people to destroy the world?"

To the Nano-Celluloids like Lævateinn, and to Ignasis, the master of the Nano-Celluloids, this world was a giant cage imprisoning them.

In order to obtain true freedom, they had to destroy the moon and prison that Airen had created at the cost of his own life, and destroy the gate that was this world.

By now, it seemed like the moon was about to be destroyed. Durindana had appeared, Lævateinn had also come to this world, and only Ignasis was left to escape the prison.

The enemy's power that was to be feared the most was Lævateinn.

".....Is that the situation?"

"Nn, correct."

Erumi confirmed Leerin's words.

"We don't need to include Ignasis in the enemies' power. Though it would be troublesome to fight him in Zero Territory, as long as the battle's on this side, and we keep Lævateinn from destroying this world, we have no reason to fear him. We only need to think about how to defeat Lævateinn."

".....Therefore, why would Lævateinn....."

"Well....."

Erumi interrupted Leerin's words.

She was being evasive, Leerin felt. Erumi had just deliberately dodged Leerin's words.

Leerin had evidence for her thinking.

"......I remember you just said 'I probably could have guessed'."

Had Erumi thought that Leerin wasn't paying attention and hadn't heard that?

However, Leerin hadn't missed it.

"I wouldn't have thought you were so competent. If possible, I feel that it would be a bit better for you not to know this, hm?"

"I don't want you to decide that kind of thing for me."

Leerin didn't want Erumi to decide anything for her again. Being fated to confront this being that she couldn't rely on her own strength for had brazenly distorted her life.

Moreover, Erumi was the culprit of this fate.

"Tell me."

Leerin glared at the black cat with the mood that 'if you don't tell me, I'll kill you and screw everything up'.

"Alright, not bad."

Erumi said simply.

"It's not that I didn't say it to conceal it from you, only that I feel that knowing this will make you unable to fight well."

"Don't let that bother you."

"Oh, then I'll tell you."

Then, black mist once again appeared in the center of the room, and a white light appeared, a scene appearing as well.

There was a female in the image.

"She is....."

She greatly resembled Lævateinn.

However, her age was different. Compared to the girl from before, the person currently shown in the image was older.

A mature woman.

Other than this, there was something else that also differed.

Though the scene that was shown was a picture or a still image, it could be seen that this woman was different from the girl before, as her face had a rich expression.

"Her name is Janice Courtbach. The reason Airen became like he did was because he joined the Severed Space Investigation Plan. This woman was a volunteer with him at the time."

"Janice.....?"

Her name wasn't Lævateinn?

"Janice appears to have been different from Airen who had lost his sister, given up, and no longer wanted to live. With an overly adventure-driven heart, she voluntarily joined the mission, jumping into Zero Territory, and then went missing."

Whether she hadn't noticed Leerin's doubts, or noticed but deliberately ignored them, Erumi continued speaking, while Leerin silently listened to the explanation that followed.

"Well, for the same mission, Airen and Janice went through the same training curriculum. But, in order for them to adapt to the environment of Zero Territory, there was a man who carried out body enhancement on them. His name was Soho."

The image showed another still picture. A picture taken together with Janice showed a puny, weak-looking man.

"He was an excellent scientist. After the plan suffered a setback, he returned to his lab, and completed the Nano-Celluloids that I had theorized and later thrown to the side."

"You came up with the Nano-Celluloids.....?"

A dangerous term like body enhancement made Leerin frown, but it made her even more curious.

"Didn't I say I only theorized it? I only thought of such a theory in order to convert Aurora particles, also the so-called pollutants, into energy. Nano-Celluloids are completely based off this theory, and they became military weapons..... In the end, Soho was an excellent engineer, and he had developed a favorable impression of the woman Janice whom he had met during the Severed Space Investigation Plan."

Favorable impression. Leerin hadn't thought that such a word would come out of Erumi's mouth.

"But, like I just said, Janice Courtbach disappeared in Zero Territory, and her feelings died. Regretfully, she wasn't the kind of person who could easily handle her feelings. If she couldn't get something, she would do it herself. She was like that, so she was the same as me."

"'Do it herself' means..... huh?"

Leerin felt puzzled for a moment. Leerin could understand the kind of feelings of sorrow at thinking that the person she loved could have already died. But, she couldn't understand that in that case, she would 'do it herself'.

"That's not right."

"Is it strange to fill the wound in order to forget the sorrow of loss? It's like using new love to forget the old. If the wound formed isn't filled, it will bleed forever. In order to avoid bleeding to death , the wound has to be filled with something."

"....."

"If you think her behavior wasn't something a normal person should have done, then you're wrong. A normal person couldn't do this kind of thing. So, she....."

The image followed Erumi's words, adding on another still picture.

The picture of this person was very similar to the picture in the beginning, but had a decisive difference. It wasn't a matter of different clothing or expression. Just by looking at the picture, one could clearly realize that the two images gave off different atmospheres.

Leerin couldn't feel anything from this image.

"The first Nano-Celluloid that they created, and their prototype. The ultimate ancestor and governor of the Nano-Celluloids, Nano-Celluloid Interface I Lævateinn, was created."

"Lævateinn."

This picture really was Lævateinn.

She was physically exactly the same as Janice, but they didn't seem like the same person. Because, the feeling given off from her body was like a doll, not the presence of a human being. Moreover, since Lævateinn was something created, since her looks were so much like a human, just because of this, she could be called a genuine doll.

A doll that could move on its own.

"Well, the protagonist of this story has finally debuted. At the time there was a group of people whose bodies were affected by the Aurora particles, though to a lower degree than Airen, and their special characteristics awoke, and were called Abnormals. The Nano-Celluloids were used as weapons to expel the Abnormals, because they had become enemies along with Airen."

"Did Airen and that Janice person know each other?"

If he fought an enemy with the face of an old friend, could he have felt pained?

"Who knows? In either case, he fought till the last, so I think that even if there was a problem, Airen probably overcame it. Right, Saya?"

"Correct, he indeed had his struggles."

Saya nodded agreement.

"But Airen's not important, the important point now is Lævateinn."

Erumi pulled the conversation back on topic.

"The Nano-Celluloids can change Aurora particles into energy, proliferating endlessly. Thinking that Nano-Celluloids couldn't go against the will of their creators, people used them in the Zero

Territory. But, an error occurred that they hadn't expected. The biochemical machinery of the Nano-Celluloids unexpectedly developed the ability to think individually, taking actions against their orders."

"Which was?"

"I think, therefore I am. Where did we come from, and where are we going? The reasons for existence. Just like humans being troubled by many things, Lævateinn also doubted the reasons for her existence. What she couldn't understand wasn't her original mission as a Nano-Celluloid, but the reason she was such a form."

"Form....."

Possessing a peculiar form didn't make Lævateinn feel superior, that she was a chosen existence. Just by being the first Nano-Celluloid, she was already a special existence.

The important point was, why was she this kind of form, that was the question that Lævateinn cared about.

"Lævateinn obtained the form that the creator loved. But, when she realized that Soho felt despair towards her appearance, it produced a desire to completely reproduce Janice Courtbach to a greater level."

Leerin didn't know and couldn't experience what kind of feelings that man named Soho had. Just by comparing the two pictures, she could see how much the two women differed.

Their shape was the same, but that didn't mean they would become the same person, because their expression, demeanor, and temperament were very important. Moreover, expression and demeanor were created by the feelings the person felt during their life.

Thinking of this, an idea emerged in Leerin's mind.

"It couldn't be that Lævateinn still thinks of....."

"It's very probable."

Was staying in Zuellni to further understand humans?

"Up till now, Lævateinn hasn't succeeded in reproducing human characteristics. She almost breached the orders to retrieve Janice who had disappeared in Zero Territory, but the plan failed, and she had also misinterpreted human nature."

"Nature?"

"Just like Soho creating Lævateinn, was it enough for external appearance to be the same? Even if it were only a momentary thought, she still made that kind of conclusion, so she listened to Ignasis who had claimed Soho's body, and then everything continued till now."

".....Huh?"

The man in the picture was Ignasis?

"Perhaps, she was testing whether the conclusion she had made herself was correct, so she listened to Ignasis who lived in Soho's external appearance."

"Even if the form's the same, the inside is still different, right?"

"Correct."

The one who nodded her head in agreement this time wasn't Erumi, but rather Saya.

"But if we say so, Lævateinn is the same. Though our reasons are different, I'm the same kind of being."

"Ah....."

Leerin had heard before that Airen had entered Zero Territory to look for his sister, and Saya's external appearance had become exactly the same as hers because she had received his influence.

"The same form doesn't imply the same heart, right? Perhaps that was the desired answer she received after submitting to Ignasis."

Machines trying to become human. However, the way Lævateinn was born was different from humans, so she planned on gaining a human heart with a non-human method.

What kind of being was the so-called human? She endlessly thought, tested, thought, tested.....

"But, if it's like that, hasn't the reason for Lævateinn becoming a human already been lost?"

That man called Soho who had created Lævateinn's appearance hoped for the person possessing that appearance to return to his side. However, he himself had disappeared in the process.

Not only this, Lævateinn also served the person who had killed Soho.

Thinking this, Leerin couldn't help from feeling sorrow, almost sympathizing with Lævateinn.

"Even so, she still wants to destroy the world?"

"She will destroy the world."

Erumi answered.

"Why?"

"Because if she doesn't she has no way to continue advancing."

"Advancing?"

"Since she was created as a being who cannot be redeemed whatever she does, she can only think of how she can tidy up the residues of her existence. This is her guiding question."

"Correct."

The reason that Lævateinn wished to become Janice was Soho, who was already dead.

"Even so, she still can't give up, that's why she's there. Then, we can only fight with her, right?"

Leerin didn't understand, she could only shake her head.

"But....."

Saya murmured:

"Then, what exactly is she doing in that city?"

Leerin and Erumi couldn't respond to that question.

Erumi and Saya suddenly disappeared.

"The test has succeeded. I'm very satisfied even with just this."

As she departed, Erumi said this.

"The fate of this world is in your hands. I leave it to you to decide how to deal with this fate."

"....."

"I've prepared the battle well for you. You decide whether you want to fight. In the end, this battlefield has nothing to do with me. "

The voice informed her of this with an almost frank tone.

After the cat left the room, Saya also quietly departed.

Leerin felt that the atmosphere in the room had returned to its original state. Erumi had probably done something to this place just now.

Erumi's words were quite serious.

But, Leerin cared about something else compared to that seriousness.

"......In the end, what goal does Lævateinn have?"

A strong presence closed in from the other end of the residence. The Queen would soon arrive, and Minse who was in the building had also begun taking action. Erumi had somehow cut off this space by some means, and when it was restored back, the surrounding presences begun moving at the same time.

As Leerin heard those sounds, she crouched down in place, while examining the injuries of Eldein who was fallen by her feet.

"Fill the hole."

Not retrieving the things lost, but blocking the hole in one's heart with something else.

Was this the right way?

"But..... I'm sorry."

She still didn't have that kind of feeling. Even if that kind of blank space had already buried itself in her heart, she currently wanted to keep it that way.

"Thank you."

Eldein was still unconscious. Leerin stroked his forehead, quietly murmuring.

Since she had invaded this world, she had noticed people monitoring her from the darkness. The other party seemed to use the same substances that comprised Vati's body, the Nano-Celluloid-based monitoring system.

However, the other party didn't actively draw close to Vati's body, so she always ignored it. But, today the other party had drawn closer to this side.

Vati used this time’s proximity to try seize the control of the other party, but failed in the end. However, she had succeeded in stopping the other party from continuing to monitor herself from a closer distance.

But, why had the other party chosen this opportunity to approach Vati?

".....Perhaps I should assume the other side had already completed their preparations."

Grendan had taken defensive measures against the Nano-Celluloids, so even if it were Vati, she could only monitor from a distance.

"Erumi Rigzario really still lives, hm?"

She definitely would have come up with some further tactics, making some further preparations for facing Vati.

"But, this has nothing to do with the current situation."

As long as the other party didn't take action, she didn't plan on taking the initiative to do anything.

Vati opened the entrance door and walked out. The old-building smell that the buildings gave off mixed with the clear new morning sky. Vati felt this kind of smell while walking to the shop on the first floor, then piling the products on the electric transport vehicle that had been prepared in advance.

Vati's work was also to send the finished cakes to the partner stores in the morning. To her, finishing her work and then going to school had already become normal activity.

Helping to make cakes after waking up, then returning to her room to tidy herself up and prepare, then going out to send the cakes, and then attending class.

Vati Len's morning was busy enough to be a feast for one's eyes.

"I'm off to send them."

"I'll leave it to you."

Being sent off by Meishen, Vati started the engine of the electric transport, and departed.

Her smile was even weaker than normal.

"....."

Vati drove the electric transport while thinking of Meishen's expression just then. She had applied makeup, trying to conceal her red eyes. Even so, her voice was still a bit hoarse, and her movements were more sluggish than normal. In order to complete what she needed to do in the limited time, Vati's movements had to be faster than normal.

This was unavoidable.

You could even say Vati had thought that there was a good possibility that she would have a break from work today.

However, today Meishen had still opened the store.

"By expecting herself to lose, she increased her resistance?"

What was the resistance of the heart after all? Though it was in Vati's vocabulary, she didn't understand what kind of existence it was. But, if she knew before that she would be wounded, even if it were this kind of pain, she should be able to endure it.

Even if Meishen was in this kind of situation it wasn't surprising.

After all, in Vati's eyes, her actions were only the conclusion of her low self-esteem.

"I wouldn't have thought that she would so quickly advance to the next stage. But, since she's already advanced to the next stage, I should observe well her subsequent actions."

What did Meishen plan to face the heartache that she still suffered to today?

When that time came, what would be the answer she would find?

Soon after, the delivery was completed. To Vati who had grasped the entire traffic of Zuellni, finding the most suitable route for delivery was far too easy. She stored the electric transport in a large locker near the school building, then walked to school.

Almost all the people in the entire city would be gathering to school at this time.

Vati walked on the overcrowded road to school, obviously noticing Meishen walking dozens of Mels ahead. Though the gaze of her eyes was blocked by other students and couldn't see Meishen, her senses still could pass through the Nano-Celluloids, so she observed Meishen with her own eyes.

Vati observed Meishen with an appearance that could be extremely aptly described as feeble. Vati kept looking at her walking on the road in a trance, her eyes seeming to have no focus, dangerously pushing forward with the tide of others.

"Mornin-"

At that time, Meishen's two childhood friends walked over.

"Good morning, Mei-chi."

Mifi and Naruki surrounded Meishen from left and right.

"Ah, good morning."

Meishen who had noticed the two half a second late raised her head.

"!"

It was only a bit. But, the expressions of the two definitely changed.

As soon as they saw Meishen's face, the expressions of the two went slightly stiff, and a moment later returned to normal.

"Okay, I remember you don't have to open the shop tomorrow, right?"

"Huh? Uh, nn."

"Right, then tomorrow come live at my place."

"Huh? That suddenly....."

"Aha, because Naruki doesn't clean the house. She said her work is too busy and she doesn't return to the room much, so she drops all the work on me. What do you think?"

"How rude. But, doesn't Mi-chan use the room at a much higher rate than I do?"

"That's true, but whether it's my own room or the kitchen, I still clean it well. Who didn't clean the shower room that was her responsibility and the bathroom that we take turns on?"

"Ugh..... how annoying."

The two of them bickered. Meishen first opened her eyes in surprise, then suddenly laughed.

"Nn, okay. It's enough if I clean?"

"If possible, I also want to taste Meishen's handmade cuisine that I haven't eaten for so long, and a lot of it. Don't worry, Nakki will make sure it all gets eaten."

"Nn, Mi-chan can really eat. It's like she wants to write a diet book, so she tries to see how fat she can get after a day of overeating!"

"What! Well, sometimes it's like that, but sometimes not. Nakki too, you've left the platoon so you don't exercise enough now, right? It's that kind of time! In order to solve the problem of not exercising enough, we have to supplement ourselves with lots of nutrients!"

"Well.....!"

"Wellllll.....!"

"Then, you two..... I know, I'll make food for you."

The two pushed each other while wearing smiles, and Meishen bit her lip with a puzzled expression.

"Please make a lot!"

"Nn, I leave it to you."

"Really....."

Though she showed a puzzled expression, the smile mixed into it was already different from before, with a cheerful feeling added to it.

Vati saw this act.

She observed without moving her eyes up till she reached the place she expected.

Epilogue

"I like you."

The words heard in the resting room of the practice battlefield made Layfon almost forget to breathe.

"......Mei?"

Right after speaking, Meishen's face went crimson, but she didn't lower her face, continuing to look over. She made Layfon feel some kind of pressuring atmosphere, and he couldn't help but want to move his gaze.

However, that was impossible for Layfon. Truthfully, he felt that he couldn't do that, or perhaps Meishen's eyes stopped him.

Meishen's desperate eyes that seemed as if she had opened up everything made Layfon unable to move from that spot.

The feelings that her timid personality had developed made Layfon's heart feel a great blow.

Not only from the pain of being unable to respond to Meishen's feelings.

It also included the fact that he had once again been outgrown.

Meishen had opened her own store, sincerely and diligently doing what she wanted to do. She had also moved a step ahead of Layfon. The past her who was normally shy and had always stayed with her childhood friends was already gone.

So.....

"I'm sorry."

Layfon couldn't speak however he wanted, but he couldn't say something like 'I'm still not sure of my own feelings'. He could only speak like this, hating his slow self that hadn't noticed her feelings.

He could only sincerely reply to her:

"A person like me isn't fit to be with Mei."

Layfon was at a complete loss, and at the end he had been excluded by the changes around him without having done anything at all. He had been pushed aside by Leerin, left behind by Nina. And today, he had seen with his own eyes the growth of Meishen's heart.

"I haven't changed at all, nor can I change anything."

Should he consider being able to stand back up again as progress? But, just that wasn't enough. By the time he realized that he had already lost something, even if he wanted not to lose anything more it was already too late.

Leerin had taught him this.

"A useless man like me isn't suitable for Mei."

The self-derogatory language even made Layfon feel weary.

Though Layfon's expression in front of her was very calm, it was very difficult for him to accept that he had lost to Nina and Claribel. Layfon had already made the realization before that he could lose, but that didn't mean he could casually accept that fact.

He was very remorseful.

His outstanding Military Arts were the only strength he could brag about to others, but he had treated it lightly. Was it because of this that he had been caught up to? He was truly too useless.

Layfon didn't want to be left behind again by anyone.

"......That's not true."

Meishen said with a trembling tone.

"That's not true."

She steadied her words.

Layfon went to the hospital in the morning.

Obviously, he was going to see Felli.

"Hah....."

Layfon passed through the entrance of the hospital. He passed through the small group of people waiting in line, advancing towards the hospitalization building, but inadvertently leaked out a sigh.

After he noticed that, Layfon slapped his cheeks.

He quickly arrived at the hospital room. As a precaution, he knocked on the door, and a voice responded to the sound of the door.

"Come in."

"....?"

Layfon was surprised, pushing open the door.

"Felli!"

"Good morning."

"Ah, right. Good morning."

Layfon excitedly rushed into the hospital room, and Felli's light tone calmed him down like dumping a bucket of cold water on him. Felli wore the hospital clothes sold in the hospital canteen, and seemed to have just finished eating breakfast.

".....Are.....you alright?"

The breakfast on the tray was already gone, and she was currently drinking from a full cup, probably bought from a vending machine.

"I woke up in the evening. After the doctor gives me a thorough examination, if there are no problems, I can leave the hospital immediately."

"Really..... that's great."

"It progressed unexpectedly smoothly. Though that old lady looks like that, she's definitely a very good person."

Felli said this lightly. Layfon sat on the folding chair placed next to the bed, relaxing his breath.

"That's great..... it's really great."

"What exactly were you worrying about? There's no way I would lose."

Felli drank tea without expression, and Layfon inadvertently thought of her appearance last night.

"Ah, but..... do you know why you're in the hospital?"

"Uh-"

Felli's iron expression moved.

"You don't know? You were in a serious condition yesterday."

"It was Delbone's scheme."

"Huh?"

"It was a plot."

"Uh..... Even if you say that, Delbone has already died."

"She definitely set a trap on her heritage. She completely didn't think that the innocent me could stand my ground as her equal with such a thing. Really, Grendan has no normal people."

"Um, ah..... I can't really deny that."

In the end, this couldn't be analyzed too hard.

"Um - then, how was the analysis?"

"I finished. That's an obvious thing, who do you think I am?"

"That's great, congratulations."

In the heritage was imprinted Delbone's battle experience. Layfon wasn't a Psychokinesist, so even now he still didn't

understand what exactly giving memories or experience to someone else meant.

"Even to Psychokinesists, it's still not something simple, so I had to spend that much effort."

"Oh."

Felli was bending things a bit, she herself wasn't a normal Psychokinesist, right?

But, that was a fact.

"......You don't care?"

"Huh?"

"I mean Delbone's heritage. Did you forget what I said before the analysis?"

Layfon obviously remembered.

"But, what's more important is that you're safe and unharmed, it's really great."

"Hah....."

Felli once again let out a heavy noise, the words stuck in her throat.

"It's really unbearable..... unexpectedly saying those lines without flinching, what's up with that? Really, it makes people mad....."

"......Huh? What did you say?"

Felli's voice was too quiet, and Layfon didn't hear it.

"Nothing. Never mind that, regarding the heritage....."

"Nn."

"Just as I expected, her memories were really added into the battle experience in pieces."

"....."

Before the analysis the two had spoken about this.

Long before Alsheyra, Delbone had been in Grendan participating in Grendan's battles. If it were here, perhaps she knew information that Layfon and the others did not. Only because of this had Felli said there was a reason to analyze the heritage as quickly as possible.

This was also in order to understand the situation Nina was currently in.

"It's possible that she was unable to completely separate the memories from the battle experience. But, it's very probable that she deliberately broke up her memories, then mixed them in to her heritage."

"That....."

"I don't know if she didn't think the day would come that we could use these memories. But, the guidelines for our future actions have already been established."

".....Is that so."

Felli's words made Layfon realize something.

"Though it has to depend on the movement of the city, there will have to be a day when we leave the city to go outside."

"To outside?"

"Do you still remember? That ruined city near the selenium mine."

"Of course I remember."

Because the Electronic Fairy that they had seen there was the Haikizoku in Nina's body.

In other words, since they had seen that Haikizoku in that city, the situation had slowly become what it was today.

"What was in that city?"

"That city was Delbone's hometown."

"Huh?"

Layfon remembered that he had once heard that Delbone hadn't been born in Grendan.

"Though it's only a fragment of memory, I can confirm that that city is bound to have something related to this situation."

"......I understand."

Layfon nodded agreement with Felli's words.

At the time, Meishen had said this.

"Layton has always been very likeable. Always, starting from the school entrance ceremony to now."

"Mei....."

She had a face as if she were about to cry, saying this with a voice sounding like she was about to cry.

She should be very pained, not wanting to stay, but she stayed here for Layfon, doing her best to express this.

"Layton always works hard for others, gets hurt for others. Layton has always been likeable, with everyone else only able to chase from behind. Layton has always been likeable."

"But....."

"But, Layton has been hurt far too much, so everyone wants Layton not to continue getting hurt."

"..........?"

Didn't want him to get hurt?

"How could that....."

"I'm not too clear, and I don't know if this is what everyone thinks."

"Right, how could that be."

He was a Military Artist. Battle was an obvious obligation, and being injured was also an obvious thing.

She couldn't have alienated Layfon because of this kind of reason.

"But, Layfon who plans to advance alone truly looks painful, perhaps everyone doesn't want to see that kind of expression shown again."

When was that? Layfon remembered that kind of situation had happened several times, but he hadn't said anything. Every time he had run into such a situation, Layfon thought that he had put on a calm attitude, but Meishen had still noticed.

Thinking of this, Layfon could only feel that he was very sorrowful, and.....

".....Thank you."

"Huh?"

A thankful feeling surged up in his heart.

"Thank you for concentrating on me."

She always had been looking at him.

It was the same regardless of if it were an uncomfortable or painful time. Though she couldn't do anything during battle, other than that, she had always been looking at Layfon.

And the days in which she did that would be ending today.

"Thank you."

".....Then, can you answer me one last thing?"

Meishen who was stiff and seemed like she would cry at any moment stubbornly turned the tears in her eyes into a smile.

"What is it?"

"Please keep being likeable."

"Huh?"

"So that I can always think the first boy I liked was such a likeable person, please always stay likeable."

".....I don't know how to do that."

"It's enough if Layfon makes every effort to do what he wants to do."

"....."

"With that, Layfon will definitely be very likeable."

After saying this, Meishen showed a stiff smile.

Layfon couldn't betray that smile.

He once again realized.

"Let's go to that city."

If by doing that he could understand everything.

"I'll go anywhere."

Translation Notes and References

1. ↑ Clothes to be worn out of the house - higher quality than ' home clothing'.
2. ↑ The data that Delbone left for Felli. See Volume 14.
3. ↑ Vati here uses manager to refer to Meishen. Note that this is the Japanese thing where they talk directly to someone but address them in the third-person.
4. ↑ See Volume 13 Cadenza Road Itto Part 2.
5. ↑ See Volume 7 Chapter 1.
6. ↑ Dalshena is speaking here, referencing Sharnid leaving the 10th platoon.
7. ↑ See Volume 13 Post Epilogue.
8. ↑ The cat is speaking to Leerin.